SPECIAL ISSUE

The COVID-19 Crisis and Racial Justice & Equity: Addressing the Twin Pandemics

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This issue of the Journal of Higher Education Management is dedicated to those American college and university leaders who have confronted the challenges of the COVID-19 and Racial & Ethnicity crises which have tested and continue to test our industry in an unprecedented fashion.

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The Pandemics of Racism and COVID-19 — Guest Editors' Comments and Acknowledgements

It is an honor and privilege to serve as guest editors for this special thematic issue of Journal of Higher Education Management, *The COVID-19 Crisis and Racial Justice & Equity: Addressing the Twin Pandemics*. The genesis of this project emerged while participating in the 2019-2020 class of the American Council on Education Fellows program. We were active observers of the decision-making processes institutional leaders made regarding operational and academic priorities across various campuses. We learned a great deal by watching the way senior leaders worked to build new structures to support rapid change brought on by the crisis.

At the time of writing the introduction for this special thematic issue, the following events unfolded: insurrection and White supremacy on full display during the January 6 riots on Capitol Hill; a raging Coronavirus pandemic disproportionately affecting communities of color in the U.S.—so far over 513,000 people have died from COVID-19; prominent American officials publicly described COVID-19 as the "China virus," which contributed to increased anti-Asian sentiments that—in turn— led to harassment of individuals who share that identity; and we emerged from a summer of protests following the tragic death of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans who were murdered by police officers. The events over the past year underscore the prevalence of systemic racism in America today and the inextricable role higher education must play in the solution.

The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the long festering wounds of racial injustice, disrupted higher education's operations in unprecedented ways. Due to the racial stratification of the workforce at many colleges and universities, we observed a swift pivot to remote work which unduly placed essential workers at risk for exposure to COVID-19. Data from the U.S. Department of Education showed that 46% of workers in low-level service roles were employees of color (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). Custodians, food service workers, groundskeepers, and maintenance staff, were required to come to campus more frequently and interact with other workers and students. Conversely, given the professional or leadership positions they disproportionately occupy, White employees had more flexibility to work remotely and teach online. Moreover, the decision to move to online-only instruction for numerous colleges and universities sparked apprehensions about the quality of educational instruction, and inadvertently created disparities in academic performance for students with limited internet access and those requiring additional learning support services. The pandemic also significantly altered other aspects of college life, from admissions and enrollment, on-campus housing-dining, to collegiate athletics. These concerns complicated our understanding of the financial future of higher education institutions in a time of considerable financial instability, both in the form of unexpected costs and potential reductions in revenue.

It is worth noting, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher education were not free from contributing to inequities. Many colleges and universities struggled in their efforts to close the equity gap between their White student population and low-income, first-generation, students of color. Structural inequities persist because some institutions continue to deny the ongoing impact of systemic racism and oppression. Preliminary data indicated the pandemic exacerbated the disproportionate impacts faced by students and faculty of color in today's colleges and universities. According to Cahalan et al. (2020), the uneven landscape in colleges and universities is heavily influenced by race, income, history, geography, a wide range of state policies, and the declining value of federal student aid.

Fortunately, the American Council on Education's (ACE) 2020 status report on race and ethnicity in higher education (Taylor et al., 2020) offers hope and a data-informed foundation for those working to close persistent equity gaps. If we are to identify one silver lining of these pandemics it is the

opportunity for new equity-minded leadership and education. Examples of equity-minded leadership would include things such as considering the effects of the coronavirus on distinct communities, demographic cohorts, and identity groups. As colleges and universities consider reopening in phases, what are the decision-making strategies administrators will employ to close the digital access gaps for students of color who have trouble connecting to courses from rural, urban, or lower-income communities? How are administrators and faculty ensuring underrepresented students and marginalized groups are not experiencing the same racism in virtual classrooms that they long experienced in on-campus learning environments before the pandemic? And how do colleges and university leaders provide robust support for racially diverse faculty, staff and administrators who are often tasked with providing mentoring and other forms of support for underrepresented students? The simple fact is these inequities can no longer be ignored if our institutions of learning are going to survive and thrive.

Moving forward, it is clear academic leadership is especially in demand for actively supporting faculty, students, and staff from racially underrepresented groups. College and university leaders need to incorporate principles centered on diversity, equity, justice, liberation, and inclusion into their COVID-19 responses. Higher education administrators must meet the challenge head-on and do the work required to bring equity to our college and university campuses across the nation.

We are excited to bring together scholarly work documenting the intersection of equity and decision making in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The articles in this volume address these Twin Pandemics across a diverse and shifting higher education landscape. In broad terms, they address three waves of the pandemic: 1) Crisis Leadership Responses to the Pandemic; 2) Continuity of the Academic Mission; and 3) Planning for the Future. Through quantitative, qualitative, and reflective exploration, these articles address the underlying problems of race, region, class, and equity in higher education through these three dimensions. The thought-leaders in this volume understand many of the problems highlighted in the *Twin Pandemics* are rooted in a history of exclusion in American higher education. Their work reflects a commitment to creating solutions for a more equitable higher education landscape in a post COVID-19 world. This work will not be easy, but principled and steadfast. Leadership is about more than expediency. From this work, we can move toward a more perfect academic union.

We would like to acknowledge the support of Christine K. Cavanaugh, Dan L. King, and Sydney J. Freeman, Jr. from the American Association of University Administrators for this opportunity; American Council on Education (ACE) for the Fellowship experience and members of our ACE Fellows cohort; and finally our home institutions, New Mexico Highlands University, National Defense University, and UNC Charlotte. Let us begin.

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Pandemics, You Will Not Break Our Spirit — Consulting Editor's Comments and Acknowledgements

> "Oppression is not focused on the breaking of the body but is designed to break the spirit of the oppressed…The enemies of Black bodies have never been after our bodies; they are after our spirit. Slavery was not simply the subjugation of Black bodies, but an attempt to break our spirit…And the public lynching of George Floyd was not an attempt to arrest a Black man for passing a fake $20 bill; it was an attempt to break our collective and communal spirit." -Wesley Knight

We can no longer do scholarship that is one dimensional. We can no longer attempt to solve the academy's intractable administrative challenges without engaging both critical and intersectional approaches. It is time out for pontificating and philosophizing about these problems using surface analytical tools and theorizations.

We need researchers investigating practical solutions addressing the root causes of these problems, moving away from only addressing its symptoms. And we need empowered and informed leadership that utilizes the most current and accurate scholarship to inform their policies and practices. That is why this compendium of pivotal articles addressing two of higher education's most pressing and current issues is so relevant and important.

The twin pandemics of racism and Covid-19 are issues that will continue to impact our campuses for the foreseen future. A laissez-faire approach to solving these challenges is unacceptable. I am excited that so many of the nation's top scholars and leaders so deftly addressed these issues within this special issue.

Ijeoma Oluo in the book "Mediocre: The dangerous legacy of White Male America" penned these important words,

> There would be no widespread cries for justice. There would be little outrage in the streets. Black people would be outraged, Black people would demand justice. But there was not enough of us to be heard, and that was by design.

When speaking of addressing the pandemic of racial injustice on American higher education campuses we must understand that this challenge is not something that is unforeseen but a calculated design flaw. Too many Predominantly White Institutions engage in what Yawo Brown coined as, *Polite White Supremacy*, where they intentionally underfund and under-resource diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Higher education leaders often coddle and placate to members of racist boards, legislators, think tanks, external donors and their own administrators, faculty, staff, and students to ensure that these institutions are not transformed into the sites of decolonization and liberation that they could be.

Those of us who are activist scholars and higher education administrators often struggle with the institutional silence that accompanies our cries and demands for equity and justice in the academy. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it this way, "there comes a time when silence is betrayal."

Dr. Wesley Knight in his speech, *Hold this for me*, succinctly provides a key explanation for the pervasive silence of college and university administrators when addressing issues of racial justice and equity when he posits that,

> Can I tell you why they are (White people) silent, why they sit in their privilege and why they never speak up? It is because they are trying to break your spirit.

For some of our leaders, the issue of addressing racial justice is new. Recently, higher education administrators have had to acknowledge and push back against some of the racist sentiments propagated both inside and outside of the academy. It has not helped that we have had publicly elected officials use phrases like the "China or Wuhan virus" to invoke anti-Asian fear amongst the general American population. Many administrators seek to avoid experiencing a repeat of anti-Asian hate crimes and incidents that roiled American campuses such as, SUNY Binghamton, University of California, Irvine, Boston College, and Syracuse University in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

Although the murder of George Floyd, by a uniformed police officer was the catalyst for many institutions to reaffirm their efforts to address racial injustice and promote anti-racism. We still have a long way to go.

Racial justice and equity's pandemic twin, the COVID-19, has equally and as pervasively changed the academy into the future. It has caused higher education leaders to fundamentally rethink the ways in which our institutions have functioned. We have had to rethink student services such as housing, campus safety, public events, and health services. Instruction has had to be reconceptualized, as many institutions have incorporated new pedagogical approaches such hyflex, hybrid, and online methods.

All of this change and both pandemics have taken a toll on our collective spirits. But this collection 18 peer-reviewed articles that address the themes of responding to these pandemics, ensuring the continuity of the academic mission and planning for the future, gives us hope. I want to thank Christine K. Cavanaugh, co-consulting editor of this issue and Dan L. King, executive editor of the journal for their critical understanding of the fact that any credible special issue addressing the challenges faced by the American higher education system today must address the twin pandemics of Covid-19 and racial justice and equity. I would also like to acknowledge the able leadership of Juanita Cole, Jeffrey B. Leak, and Edward Martinez in managing and curating such an incredible and timely journal volume.

Although these twin pandemics may have altered our lives forever. I am encouraged by the words of Ronnie Vanderhorst, "Wherever there is life, there is hope". Covid-19 nor racial injustice and inequities will break our collective spirits. These scholarly, yet practical articles not only provide us with solutions to issues caused by these pandemics, but give us hope for a brighter future within the academy.

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An Essay: Reflections on Leadership in an Era of COVID-19 and in the Midst of a Reckoning on Racial Injustice

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We are all called to lead in amazing ways. I was called as president of Lexington Theological Seminary in 2011. Located in Lexington, Ky., in the heart of the Bluegrass State, Lexington Theological Seminary (LTS) was established in 1865 at the end of the Civil War. It is a freestanding, mainline Protestant seminary affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The school has a rich history of educating clergy and laity, as well as producing leaders for ministry at the highest levels of denominational leadership. However, like many theological schools, the institution found itself facing a period of sustained difficulty. Following an intense period of reinvention and approaching my 9th year of service as president, I applied for and received a Reflective Leadership grant from Leadership Education at Duke Divinity.

The purpose of the Duke program was to provide Christian leaders with "balcony time" to reflect on accomplishments, broaden perspectives and discern next steps. The timing for such reflection seemed ideal, given my length of service and the changes that had occurred at the seminary during my leadership. I was grateful to receive the award because "balcony time" was exactly what I needed. I wanted to give serious attention to my leadership in a crisis-filled context and what that leadership might look like if not driven by the urgency of institutional fragility, economic crisis and human resistance to change. I wanted to interrogate my experiences as president for a deeper meaning. I sought to gain insight from my lived narrative by examining my actions, feelings, thoughts and yes, emotions associated with my presidency (Killen and de Beer, 2006, p. 67). The insight from such an interrogation I hoped would enhance and enrich my leadership and future presidency. Simply put, I wanted to become a better president. I wanted to become a better leader for the institution and industry leader that LTS had become. Capturing the intensity of this work, and reflecting on what had been accomplished, how it had been accomplished and how to prepare for the future was important to defining the seminary's reality into the next decade. This period of reflection was encapsulated by the theme of leading from crisis to stability. The irony of this theme was not lost on me as I was challenged to once again lead an institution facing crisis – but this time, twofold: a global health pandemic and a reckoning on race and injustice.

Listening to my Life

In September 2011, I was called and named president of Lexington Theological Seminary. My call to the presidency was well-received in many quarters and marked as historic, as I was the first woman and first African-American called to lead the institution. Sadly, my call was also greeted with deep skepticism that belied my experience, knowledge, and track record as an able educational administrator and church leader. Such skepticism was almost obligatory given the long-standing institutional tensions between administration, trustees and faculty. This reaction was a not-so-subtle message to administration and trustees of a continued resistance to change.

For me it was a reminder of the intersectionality of race and gender in professional milieus to which I had entered decades ago in the Church as a minister and in the Academy as an administrator. These two institutions were not known for accepting, welcoming and supporting women or people of color. And, having served at four other institutions of higher education and in church leadership for more than a decade, it was not the first time my abilities had been questioned or my presence co-opted to serve other agendas. I should not have been surprised. Nonetheless, despite a rather inelegant welcome from some, I never once thought of turning back.

Accepting the position of president followed intentional conversations with family, mentors and peers. Most importantly, it was an outgrowth of my understanding of my vocation. It is the calling I heard from God. I listened to my life for the truth of my life and the way in which God would have me embody the gift of my life (Parker, 2000, p. 4). From this deeply personal and faithful perspective, it was clear to me and others that my life had led me to the presidency and compelled me to say, "Yes!" to the challenges of leading a theological school.

Defining Reality

Defining reality is the first job of a leader (DePree, 2004, p. 11). The reality of my work as president was aspirational for some, spirit-filled for others, and deeply practical for all. Lexington Theological Seminary's reality was anchored in the institution's mission to educate the next generation of leaders for church and society. It was operationalized by four strategic imperatives: academic excellence and relevance, sustaining pastors in ministry, financial equilibrium and growth, and developing a quality place to work and study. Linking board actions and outcomes to the mission and these imperatives was critical to demonstrating the seminary's progress towards a transformed reality.

As the president, I was charged with attending to the day-to-day management of the institution's mission to ensure positive and tangible outcomes. I had a "let's get on with it" approach to the challenges before LTS and admit to more than a grain of strategic patience (or impatience) when engaged in conversations that led to retrenchment or ongoing refusals to accept the data which affirmed the seriousness of our institutional context. A former member of the seminary's Board of Trustees, I was familiar with the issues LTS was facing. In a 2008 board meeting, the trustees identified a number of factors to be addressed in order to ensure long-term financial sustainability: personnel, student recruitment, development, diversity, scholarships, academically relevant programs and a more prudent use of the endowment. Following that board meeting, the market collapsed, resulting in a loss of nearly 20% of the endowment for a loss of nearly $5 million. LTS, as part of its response to this financial crisis, sought and received permission from the Fayette County Circuit Court to use its restricted funds as unrestricted funds. The order was signed in July 2009, providing the seminary with the necessary and appropriate financial flexibility to navigate the growing institutional crisis in ways that would help to stabilize the seminary, allow for the creative development of a new curriculum and create space for renewed focus on the seminary's mission. The institution was in a state of declared financial exigency, with two active lawsuits by former tenured professors who had been released during an academic restructuring process and with a promising but untested competency-based model for theological education. However, with the institution's deep connections to the church, well of goodwill, and "good bones," many of us believed that LTS could be effectively reinvented. Channeling the determination and spirit of the Board of Trustees, one trustee adopting Sheryl Sandberg's motto, encouraged us to "lean in" and embrace the opportunity to transform the seminary.

Against that backdrop, LTS embarked on a 14-year period of intense reinvention, and for nine of those years, I served as president. The reinvention process propelled the Seminary to reclaim its historic mission and redesign its programs to better support that mission. At the beginning of this process, when

the future seemed to hang in the balance, the LTS faculty and staff stepped up by designing and implementing academic programs that reflected the complex lives of our non-traditional student population and the congregations they served.

During this period, besides orienting its academic programs to an online hybrid, competency-based educational model, the seminary sold its historic campus and relocated, cut its endowment draw in half for seven consecutive years (from 10% to 5%), and stabilized enrollment and the senior leadership team. Additionally, the school received over $4 million in grants, completed the first successful comprehensive fundraising campaign since the mid-1970s, tackled the uncomfortable subject of shared governance, and finally came out of financial exigency. There was much to celebrate.

A New Crisis – COVID-19

The initial reports of a virus that caused flu-like symptoms did not engender widespread alarm. In a February 2020 meeting of the leadership team – the Chief Financial Officer, Vice-President of Development, Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Dean, and the President – the urgency of the moment was not apparent. The leadership team spent 20 minutes discussing what we knew about the virus and agreed to monitor reports on the websites of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). We agreed to listen to reports from faculty, staff and students and communicate with each other to ensure that we developed an appropriate response. With an eye on responses from peer institutions and in conversation with colleagues, we concluded this portion of the meeting with an agreement to reassess the situation the next week. We affirmed that if necessary, LTS could move quickly to address student concerns should they arise. There was concern but no urgency to our discussion. A member of the leadership team did offer this observation: "If left unattended, this kind of unknown virus could be debilitating and result in the complete shutdown of our country to avoid spreading the virus." The observation seemed out of the realm of possibility, however; after all, we had all lived through H1N1 and Ebola. Due to the lack of specificity in the early reports, we were not convinced that this virus could cause major disruption.

Shortly following this meeting, the WHO declared the novel coronavirus a global pandemic, and it became clear that there would be national, regional, and local implications for how we lived and worked. As LTS faced this new crisis, the timeliness of the theme of the Reflective Leadership grant, "leading from crisis to stability," was not lost on me. In the midst of a successful institutional reinvention and a conscious choice to examine and improve my leadership, I found myself managing a crisis that disrupted all of our professional, personal, spiritual, and economic lives.

During its reinvention process, the Seminary had reshaped its curriculum to embrace online instruction, routinely conducted technology-assisted meetings, and as part of a commitment to work-life balance and well-being, supported remote work practices. Now with COVID-19, LTS was well positioned to respond to concerns raised by students and employees. Ten years of teaching in an online context meant the Seminary had established policies and practices faculty could use to address students' anxieties regarding deadlines, papers, projects and exams. Consequently, as the WHO warning became clear in March, our guidance to students was to continue to complete online classes. In other aspects, LTS adapted to a new normal to address institutional concerns related to COVID-19. To employees who worked on campus, the guidance was to work remotely, and we assured those attending onsite events that precautionary measures were being taken to sanitize the common areas of the building and that no more than 10 people would be in any given meeting. We also shared links to CDC COVID-19 guidance so those connected to the Seminary could access the most accurate information and resources regarding the pandemic.

Through feedback from students, faculty and staff, I soon realized that the Seminary's calm response to an obviously growing crisis was perceived as a lack of understanding by Seminary leadership about the potential damage COVID-19 could cause individuals and institutions. The onslaught of information coming from all quarters about higher education's challenges with a rapid movement to online instruction and the mounting concerns students were having at other institutions led to an increase in anxiety among our students, although they were not necessarily experiencing those same challenges or problems. It became clear that students needed more information about the virus. Conflicting, incomplete, and even misleading information abounded as we sought to glean consistent and credible updates. In Kentucky, Governor Andy Beshear's daily briefings became must-see TV as he reported the status of the virus and updated the public about healthy-at-home and healthy-at-work policies and practices to combat the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

Secondly, it became clear that students wanted to hear from us directly and from each other as peer colleagues. The average age of an LTS student is fifty-five. They are primarily bi-vocational clergy working full-time and serving a congregation. Suddenly, due to the closure of public and private school systems, our students were homeschooling their children. Other pressures included grappling with a loss of spousal employment or caring for sick family members. Students struggled to reimagine their ministries as pastoral roles shifted in response to parishioners' changing needs. What students wanted from seminary leadership was the assurance that we could address their academic concerns, which we were able to do, but what they also needed was a recognition that the ground had shifted for all of us in a profound and not easily quantifiable way. Faculty and staff were heroic in their efforts to respond to students and were deeply pastoral and compassionate in their care for those who were also caring for their churches, families and businesses. They wanted to hear from us, and we wanted to listen to them. Through swift modifications to academic practices, virtual town hall meetings, weekly newsletters on spiritual health and well-being, prayer meetings and worship, we were able to attend to students' practical needs and their spiritual needs as people of faith and leaders of congregations dealing with unknown effects of COVID-19.

There is no roadmap for leading a modern institution in the midst of a global health pandemic. While my time as president had taught me that defining institutional reality was key to leading, I accepted that defining reality must include an acknowledgement that I too was living in the midst of a global pandemic. Doing so was incredibly difficult, but surrounded by a strong community of faith with a strong belief in God, I was reminded that our connectivity as people of faith is more than our institutionally-defined relationships with each other. We reminded each other that what binds us together is a Christian faith that is undergirded by a Living God. The seminary made plans to conclude its academic year in June having established new patterns of worship, communication, and academic practices, and with appreciation for our newsletter, Soul Care, which emphasized for all of us that we were part of a caring community of faith. I approached the final faculty meeting of the year with thanksgiving for our community, but irony joined me again. This time, the irony was professionally ironic and personally painful.

A New Crisis – A Reckoning of Race and Injustice

A theology of the soil does not simply look for our own footprints. It also calls us to look for the footprints of our community. These are the footprints through which God speaks (Reyes, 2016, p. 94)." I have always found hope in the fact that I lead an organization that began its life at the conclusion of the Civil War when women could not vote and African-Americans were reclaiming their freedom. In more than 150 years since, this country had managed to make progress in dealing with its original sin and celebrated that an imperfect church was instrumental in creating the necessary conditions to abolish

slavery, defeat Jim and Jane Crow, and usher into our civic consciousness meaningful conversations about injustice, equality and basic fairness. I held close my responsibility to lead LTS in a way faithful to its mission but also in a way that would make the leadership of another woman or African-American probable and unremarkable.   Again, the mission of Lexington Theological Seminary is to prepare faithful leaders for the church of Jesus Christ and thus, to strengthen the church's participation in God's mission for the world. Recognizing the need and promise of this mission was made painfully clear in June 2020 as the LTS faculty and staff gathered for the final faculty council meeting of the year. George Floyd was dead, several of my childhood haunts in Chicago had been burned to the ground, and our country was being roiled by the painful awareness of another series of deaths of its citizens by fellow citizens and police officers in their communities. Fulfilling this mission to strengthen the Church's participation in God's mission for the world in the midst of a national reckoning on race required the collective wisdom, faith, prayers and actions of all of us. It required more than heartfelt, strongly worded statements about standing with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Without accompanying action, such statements rang hollow. Confessionally, I felt a deep rage that once again the call for justice had come with the blood sacrifice of an African-American. I lamented how many more Emmett Till's does America need before this violence ends?

Leading the seminary in this moment was deeply painful. Searching for words to help our faculty, staff, students and myself grapple with this reckoning wore on my soul. For me as president, and as the spouse of an African-American man and the mother of two African-American young men, it required recognition of a hard truth: We have experienced this horror before, and we have offered and received words of comfort and outrage before. We have lifted up thoughts and prayers in the deaths of many – John Crawford, Atatiana Jefferson, Dante Parker, Eric Harris, Philando Castille, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Grey, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner and Tamir Rice. Societal expressions of outrage, disgust, and thoughts and prayers have become normative in these moments of public disbelief and outrage. It was clear then and now, in 2020, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, deserved more. They deserve more than outrage. They deserve a fundamental change in our society's relationship with its Black, Brown and poor citizens.

Fulfilling our mission is to better equip our community with the tools to preach and teach the Gospel message in ways that engender justice and love rather than hate. As another step towards this action, LTS hosted an online forum, "A Call to Action," with the Rev. April Johnson, Minister of Reconciliation for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Our purpose was to listen and hear one another and decide what each of us could do in our own contexts to secure change. It was not lost on our community that those dying in disproportionate numbers with COVID-19 and those being shot and killed in what should be routine encounters with police officers were people of color. COVID-19 and the racial reckoning was highlighting the structural bias and inequality in both the healthcare and policing systems. Rev. Johnson named racism as a spiritual and theological dilemma as well as a social evil, and called for a faithful response that must be lived out in ways that eliminate the social, economic, and political oppression of those impacted by systemic racism. As leaders we must reckon with this fact in our daily walk with God and actions towards our fellow citizens.

Thus, the call to action for me was more than a conversation. I wanted the members of our community to understand at a much deeper level that the seminary was making an economic, spiritual, and intellectual investment in them as resources for change. The hope is that they can lead their respective communities in ways that will engender love for all of God's creation and manifest that love in ways that make concrete, substantive differences in the lives of Black, Brown and poor citizens. Indeed, I believe God is calling us – all of us – to return to the soil to cultivate a community of love, caring and humanity. God is calling us to leave the footprints of our stories so that we may lead others to a place of justice. This country, those we serve in our communities and the seminary itself – all are

a work in progress as we fight to find ways to manifest a Gospel of Justice. As a leader and a part of the fabric of our shared humanity, I too am a work in progress. I wrestle with what to say to a community of faithful believers who are demanding change and I struggle with leading this institution in these moments. I do so because I know that in a matter of time, I will face another challenge to say more, to do more, and to call us all to a place of deeper action for communities impacted by systemic bias in healthcare, citizens shot dead in the streets of American cities and killed while sleeping in their beds. We have been here before and I grieve the current reality that we will arrive in this place again. To my colleagues and friends, I lead with the prayer, "God in your mercy, hear us."

Leading from Crisis to Stability

Moments of crisis can bring great confusion but can also serve as opportunities for clarity, particularly for leaders. I believe that thoughtful, decisive implementation of key decisions was warranted to stabilize the institution in the midst of financial exigency, that compassion and care were key elements of reassuring our community in the midst of COVID-19, and a call to God's kingdom for strong accountability in the face of a racial reckoning were necessary to address our collective pain as we struggled with racial injustice.

In reflecting upon the leadership strengths that aid me in leading a seminary in the midst of a crisis impacting its financial, economic, cultural and academic well-being, I find that of utmost importance is to articulate a shared mission and vision. It is key to communicate clearly and often the institution's core principles. Conversations about budgets, buildings, endowments, teaching, learning, scholarship, civic responsibility and social justice are conversations about how we live out our various calls to ministry, while serving the mission of LTS to prepare faithful leaders for God's mission in the world.

Through this season of leadership, I have affirmed for myself that I must lead this community with deep appreciation that we have all been called by God to this institution. It is our unique gifts as administrators, faculty, staff, preachers, teachers and trustees that permit us to do this work together. We are all here working in response to the voice we hear to go forth and serve. Living out my vocation includes working in concert with others to ensure institutional viability for the next generation of clergy and lay leaders who need a place to explore their calls to serve.

Additionally, giving attention to the historic nature of my call and presidency is to hold myself accountable for making the path easier for the next person by creating opportunities and pathways for other women and people of color to lead at the highest levels. To recognize this is to remember and acknowledge the struggle of our ancestors. It is also to remember and acknowledge my own past struggles. Further, it is to remember and acknowledge the journey before me.

My period of reflection has brought further clarity about my leadership as a way of responding to my call to serve God, affirming my values, and sharing those values with others. Key observations about leading in times of crisis or stability include:

- **Secure the support of your governing board.** It is impossible to lead in a crisis without support and clarity from the governing board. In its affirmation of the historic mission to educate clergy for the church and with the adoption of the four strategic imperatives, the LTS Board of Trustees gave much-needed direction to the organization. Such direction enabled the president to stay on message and communicate to all stakeholders through this lens. When addressing the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice such support created a nimble and accessible decision-making structure.
- **Communicate the urgency of the moment within a quantitative and qualitative context – data and hope.** As often as possible, update the community on the state of the institution.

Demonstrate progress or challenges using data (enrollment goals, endowment draw, gifts received). Share the underlying strategy for any new initiatives, and support it with data. Also publicly celebrate success stories about the institution, faculty, staff and students. Such celebrations are important for rebuilding institutional hope.

- **Seek the expertise of others to expand the organization's understanding of a particular issue and to help the organization problem- solve.** Engaging a fundraising expert to provide a framework for the seminary's successful capital campaign, the use of CDC, WHO and state resources to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on families, and collaborating with a respected authority to facilitate conversations about race and equity expanded the dialogue on these important issues.
- **Empower those within the organization to do their best work and grow into their roles.** Support colleagues via access to professional development resources, offer encouragement, and empower them to grow and mature in those roles by demonstrating trust and allowing room for trial-and-error.
- **Work towards reconciliation and trust within the organization.** The act of creating spaces for conversations to rebuild institutional trust is never-ending. In a crisis-filled context, nearly every interaction can be fraught with hidden meanings and have the potential to be misconstrued. Acknowledge this reality. As we developed communication practices and policies for employees during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, it was important to affirm and repeat as often as possible that the administration would not put employees or their families at risk by opening up the campus. It was also clear that as we confronted the impact of racial reckoning that our students of color needed safe spaces to engage each other. Listening to their concerns, grief and expressions of hope was a step in the right direction.
- **Cultivate allies and work to secure the support of the entire community but accept that some will not receive your leadership.** It's regrettable but unlikely to change.
- **Find good mentors.** Mentors from all walks of life can encourage you, help you expand and reframe issues and provide a much needed sounding board.
- **Be authentic.** There is no substitute for the experience, character, emotional and intellectual gifts, and relationships that infuse one's leadership. Reducing the distance between who you are and how you understand your role as a leader can result in a deeper more meaningful experience for you and the organization you lead.
- **Make a commitment to grow as a leader.** Spend time defining your personal leadership capacities and how these qualities contribute to or detract from your ability to lead across the institution.

Conclusion

I am ever aware that God has called me to lead a theological school. Defining the reality of our work and ministry going forward in this place is to face squarely that the institution, those we serve, and those they serve will confront the intersectionality of race, gender, health disparities, police aggression in communities of color, and injustice and inequality as a function of our vocations. We have been called to lead and serve. It is a unique privilege to do so.

Thus, giving attention to one's narrative, how one leads, how to mature in that leadership and how to become one's most authentic and faithful self, requires a commitment to self-reflection. Such attention to one's call and growth will enable one to lead with integrity in the most unexpected and unusual circumstances. Finally, I express gratitude to Leadership Education at Duke Divinity and to

the LTS Board of Trustees for their roles in making this period of reflection possible. I have learned much that will inform my work, ministry and leadership into the next decade at LTS.

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Disruptions and Executive Leadership Values

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Introduction

The higher education issues raised forcefully by the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racism among institutions of higher education are pervasive and complex – and they join a daunting list of other disruptive issues (Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2015): the declining traditional-age college population among USA residents; student financial debt levels from collegiate attendance; learning assessment and pedagogical challenges from increasing use of online technology; and the cost structure itself within higher education. While some institutions may respond with special investigations, task forces, and committees for the "new" twin pandemics, there is probably no single approach that can address those issues as well as the other key disruptors facing higher education. While there may be a need for a coordinated approach to such factors, the ordinary and usual work still must be accomplished daily within institutions. There are rare "unused" hours among staff, faculty, and executive leaders in today's colleges and universities with few individuals who have sufficient time within their day's work to engage additional issues simultaneously. Given this situation, what can and should be done to accomplish the improvements and changes required by these two pandemics – with those pandemics occurring among more politically sensitive students, faculty, and staff? And what about other major disruptors of higher education simultaneously facing institutional leaders throughout the nation? This essay argues that the values of the senior leadership group is the decisive, strategic factor in fostering progress with such issues, including the twin pandemics now facing colleges and universities, and which may continue to impact higher education. Finally, recommendations are provided for leadership teams when facing these or similar difficult and disruptive threats.

Recent Pandemics

The initial reported responses of institutional leadership teams to the COVID-19 pandemic appeared in three clusters: first, move all instruction online to avoid the (unknown) virus effects; second to adopt a hybrid approach to instruction as necessary given adequate physical instructional space; and third, to continue with traditional campus life. The last option placed the burden on students, requiring them to sign pledges of testing, distancing, and contact limits that are mostly foreign to undergraduate students. In the second instance, the hybrid approach was primarily an attempt to protect the revenue streams of tuition, room and board, other ancillary services, and institutional fees from erosion. The first remedy of moving instruction to remote learning placed that burden squarely on faculty and subsequently, on students, for accomplishment. Underneath these three approaches also were unknown effects on student financial aid and accreditation; the interpretation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in terms of faculty "requested" to teach with personal or family health circumstances; the economic impact on student housing, dining, and sport programs; and the ability and willingness of the student body to accept a particular institutional approach without overall enrollment erosion.

As more classes were delivered via remote approaches, the issue of access and equity with technological support services came again to the forefront for educators. Students were in "home" circumstances that were not equivalent to traditional classroom learning (which they had known most of their educational life) and for many students, individual learning difficulties mounted. The issues of equity and racism inherent in socio-economic differences among students became more noticeable and exacerbated as the weeks and semesters passed. Thus, institutions faced the COVID-19 pandemic with the growing realization that inherent differences among technology access and use by students were creating further gaps in learning outcomes due to lifestyle and economic factors mostly absent when instruction was delivered in common, traditional, on-campus classroom settings. Further, there is growing unease among students and their families as they question the costs for remote classes now being delivered to their homes without the traditional aspects of the on-campus collegiate experience. Simultaneously, there was a national outcry, again and again, against racism from the multiple shootings of Black Americans which further tests the institutional fabric of colleges and universities. Social media tweets, comments previously benign, and aspects of the campus physical plant all had greater visibility, reaction, and commentary. The confluence of the two events has tested the leadership capabilities within most institutions and will continue to present challenges. And the expected vaccination "solution" for COVID-19 may be shattered by still newer pandemics and the continued, consequent erosion of traditional learning within campus locales. The economics consequences will be gigantic both on and off campus locations throughout the nation as such disruptors force the reshaping of American higher education.

The leadership response must be clear, systematic, and detailed to address the twin pandemics facing colleges and universities. The character and values of executive officers (and especially presidents) is visible across campus through their communications about the institution's practices and processes in response to these pandemics. Not everything can be done simultaneously but marks of progress must be transparent and demonstrated for the various campus constituencies. The operating values of the executive team about these issues (and including their economic consequences) must be apparent in every setting and communication so there is knowledge about expected resolutions and by what measurement standards. This will be part of an essential success strategy for campus leadership while recognizing that resource realignment also will be likely for the accomplishment of substantive change.

Early Institutions with Founder's Policy Values

There is little doubt that the earliest USA collegiate institutions were largely established to perpetuate and foster founders' values (Brubacher and Willis, 1997). The establishment of Harvard (1636) was by the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and named after its first donor, the Reverend John Harvard, a puritan minister, who left half his estate and library collection to the college to provide a "learned ministry to the colonies." Harvard was followed by the establishment of: College of William and Mary (1693) with one mission to train Anglican church ministers; Washington and Lee University (1749) with some initial funds from George Washington for study in law and government; Columbia University (1754) as King's College by George II for "future leaders of the colonial society"; and Brown University (1764) as Rhode Island College by John Manning, a Baptist minister who served as its first President from 1765 to 1791. While their institutional missions are now more diverse, early collegiate institutions were based on the founder's values, and the initial leaders of those institutions directly reflected those known values.

The colonial pattern of college establishment continued nationally until well into the next century when the first Morrill Act (1847-62) (USC Vol. 12) provided grants to States to establish public colleges specializing in "agriculture and the mechanical arts". This required curriculum for the land grant colleges, reflecting the then agrarian basis of the national economy, also required military training which led to the incorporation of the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) on collegiate campuses. Over 60 colleges and universities were established over 50 years from the sale of these land grants by the individual states. Importantly, the second Morrill Act (1890) (USC Vol. 26) initiated regular appropriations to support land-grant colleges which also included 17 predominately African American colleges and 30 American Indian colleges. Yet, even before the first Morrill Act, the first public university was chartered by the State of Georgia in 1785 but did not admit students until six years later. UNC Chapel Hill was chartered by the North Carolina General Assembly (1789) and opened to students in 1795, thus graduating its first class ahead of the Georgia university. Further throughout the 18th and 19th century, both the federal and state legislative bodies established additional public higher education institutions, usually for specific institutional purposes tied to mission definition. Examples include both the University of Delaware (1743) and Rutgers University -- first established as Queen's College in 1766 for ministers of Dutch Reformed Church and renamed in 1825 for a gift by Col. Rutgers to help financially stabilize the college. Along with these 18 and 19th century legislative initiatives, the role of donors providing institutional gifts was by then firmly established in the nation's formative years.

Recent Institutional Developments

With the growth of both public and private higher education in the 19th and 20th centuries, accreditation bodies were formed to monitor institutional quality, especially in terms of mission statements and student outcomes. There are now 19 institutional accreditation agencies and about 60 discrete program accrediting organizations recognized by the US Department of Education. Only accredited institutions and programs may process Title IV (student financial aid) federal funds on behalf of their enrolled students. This linkage between accreditation, institutional and program quality, and Title IV remains powerful. As part of the Civil rights Act of 1964, Title IV legislation prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, language, sex, religion, and disabilities. Thus, both public and private higher education institutions processing federal funds for enrolled students reflect values reinforced by that 1964 Civil Rights legislation. These legislative values through this relationship remain important as institutions once again examine policies in terms of student access, institutional cost, and financial aid since about 85% (Education Data 2019) of enrolled students receive some type of federal financial aid.

Another major development during this period was the establishment of community colleges with the first community college, Joliet Community College (www.jjc.edu/history), began in 1901 by Stanley Brown, Superintendent of Joliet Township High School (Joliet, Ill.) and William Rainey Harper, then President of the University of Chicago. JJC was established as an experimental postgraduate high school program for students wishing to remain in their own community while pursuing a college education. This core value of staying within the home community remains the dominant characteristic of the nation's community colleges. At this writing, there are about 940 community colleges throughout the country enrolling close to 38% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020) of undergraduate students who are eligible to receive Title IV funds. Such institutions have had a major reduction in enrollment (down about 20%) with the onset of the pandemics, stemming primarily from cautionary measures related to the COVID-19 virus. This enrollment decline will impact four-year institutions measurably within a few years, slowing transfer student enrollments substantially.

And lastly, another institutional development in American higher education was the establishment of the "state university system" – which is a single legal entity consisting of several institutions in one state. Examples include California State system with 23 institutions; the University System of Georgia with 26 institutions; State University System of New York with 64 institutions; and the University of North Carolina system with 16 different institutions. In these and for other public institutions, the selection of members of governing boards is concentrated within committees that explicitly reflect the majority political view of the current legislature, e.g., North Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. This shift from the founders' moral values to political values (recognizing that political values can also be moral values) is a long-term strategic intent to alter the character of higher education institutions. A recent report (Stripling and Bauman 2020) noted that "over 400 board members appointed through a multistep political procedure almost 70% assumed roles through an appointment and confirmation process controlled by one political party. Only 22% navigated the process with meaningful bipartisan checks with the majority (two to one) of board members put in place by Republicans."

Thus, the landscape of higher education in the USA now consists of a spectrum of private colleges, public institutions, for-profit colleges, community colleges, and state university systems – which are formally governed by members of Boards of Trustees, Governors, Regents, Directors, Overseers, Fellows, and Visitors that increasingly (at least for public as well as some private institutions) reflect the philosophy of the political dominance within the State. Executive leaders tread this landscape with their own values in close synchronicity with the institution's values despite any external demands, including those stemming from the twin pandemics. The array of the institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic is illustrative of the political influence among leadership groups and requires separate study to verify observations about apparently partisan responses by different colleges and universities despite facing the same external health threat.

Executive Leadership Constraints

Facing institutional pressures previously unknown, colleagues in executive leadership positions within the nations' colleges and universities are scrambling to keep institutions open, find and deliver adequate funds, and still satisfy students, faculty and staff (as well as other stakeholders) while providing leadership in the current, dynamic environment. The enrollment and fiscal pressures are huge; expectations (especially from effects of the twin pandemics) for change are high; and the future remains unclear and, in some cases, unknowable. With the congruence of values among the leadership team, then all will be well. If there is disharmony among leadership team values, its respective Board of Trustees and or campus constituent groups will be crucial elements in determining the success or failure of those in institutional leadership. Certainly, institutional history will be a guide as colleges and universities examine: their mission statements and related policies and procedures; their fiscal resources; their academic program profiles sand faculty and student quality. How will values affect leadership success or failure at a particular institution?

First, there is a need to restate the constraints facing leadership teams. The issues facing executive leaders include (but are probably not limited to) the following from the twin pandemics:

- Campus presence and ambience as the hallmark of collegiate education may no longer be possible and thus the cost model for campus tuition and fees may be obsolete.
- Anxiety from alternative learning systems may exacerbate socio-economic differences and learning needs among the student body, especially for first-generation and adult students which will directly increase demands (and costs) for mental health, counseling, and success services.

- Decline in State funding for public institutions may lead to unprecedented cuts in faculty and staff.
- Consequent increases in tuition levels will magnify the issue of access to higher education for most students (average debt for undergraduates is near $30,00 per student) which leads students and parents to further question the value of traditional collegiate education.
- Information technology requirements will accelerate costs for IT infrastructure and related equipment across campus; and
- Ancillary services (dining, student activities, campus health, religious, athletics, and campus work environments) all will require reconfiguration with probable alternative staffing patterns.

Other major disruptive issues facing the leadership teams in higher education include:

- Structural budget deficits for campus facilities including debt service on facilities infrequently or rarely used due to the loss of State funds and student fees.
- Massive decline (40%) in international student enrollment which will affect both undergraduate and graduate programs nationally and take years to redress.
- Demographic decline in the number of traditional-age individuals making the attraction and enrollment of a smaller number of freshmen more difficult for many institutions.
- Athletic programs which lack resources and audiences for meaningful campus continuation; and
- Increasing political polarization across every campus from fiscal, health, equity, and speech issues.

Leadership and Essential Values

Against this background, what makes sense for executive leaders attempting to lead during this most stressful and difficult time? How should their performance be judged? A recent article (Seltzer 2020) provides some valuable insights. The author suggests disassembling problems into smaller units; using triage to assign the degree of urgency to delineated issues; and that the decisions about short-term solutions leads to momentum that builds toward strategic institutional change. Additionally, the vision about institutional mission and its potential change is essential to gain support as changes occur throughout the institution. And within this framework, it is of key importance to situate the leadership team within both the moral and political and values of the institution and its current environment. Not to do so will curtail acceptable outcomes when determining how the twin pandemics (and other disruptive constraints) challenge the institution's stability and its future development.

Most importantly, it is imperative that executive leaders assume the role of the professor – teaching, researching, and explaining the field of the institutional constraints and dynamics to all parties. For example, if this means explaining the role of tenure to trustees, it is time well spent. If this means providing clear, understandable data about the institution's fiscal resources and tuition needs to the student body, it is time well spent. If it means explaining the reduction of State funds to the Faculty Senate or Assembly or collective bargaining chapter, it is time well spent. If it means explaining to the Trustees reasons for donor reluctance to contribute funds to the institution, it is time well spent. If it means explaining proposed program cuts to students and faculty colleagues, it is time well spent. If it means explaining the core curriculum based on the liberal arts to prospective employers, it is time well spent. If it means explaining why certain programs no longer serve students to the alumni board, it is time well spent. Every executive leader must herself or himself know and be able to articulate and communicate the basic facts surrounding their institution – and to do so clearly and coherently. This

is not to suggest there will be a single voice but rather a team of experts who can articulate the opportunities and threats facing the particular college or university with accuracy and clarity – and within that particular institution's historical and present context. And, as is true for most professors, there will be some "students" who think the explanations were wonderful, some who may not care, and others who think the explanations are incorrect and wrong. However, it is the overriding responsibility of those in leadership to persist in communicating the facts accurately to all parties in whatever setting and for each group when issues about the pandemics, related policies (and even other disruptive factors) are on the table for discussion and resolution.

The important values in this professorial, leadership process of communication are crucial: *transparency, accuracy, clarity, and empathy for all.* Individuals may be frightened or fearful with only a few hopeful that the change necessary will bring a more robust and creative institution into existence, and perhaps save their position. Others may doubt the accuracy and completeness of data received. And some colleagues may decide that the deck is rigged, and nothing will change the "intended" outcomes. Yet, as information and perceptions are shared and discussed openly, trust will grow even if the messages are difficult for some. Without transparency, accuracy, clarity, and empathy for everyone involved, communication is cynical, speculative, and even harmful for the institution. Examples of difficult discussions follow:

- How can we discuss racial justice without recognizing that leadership roles are mostly held by a single campus group? And how can the institution diversify its leadership profile?
- How can we discuss and work towards program change without knowing the character and quality of the student body? And how does the acceptance rate of student applications affect tuition levels?
- How can we articulate the rationale for change to financial aid awards without admitting historical policy shortcomings? And which shortcomings do we have resources to address with what expected impact on enrollment patterns?
- How can we gain support and trust without showing empathy to those closed out from earlier discussions? And how can the institution build capacity for change within its own psychic limits?
- How can the institution grow without addressing the demographic and monetary limits facing students? And how might that growth affect those disadvantaged or educationally limited?

Consistently, the leadership team must reflect the values not only of the institution and its historical roots but must also envision (with the help of everyone across campus) a future built on different dynamics and creative innovation. There is nothing "wrong" with where a particular institution currently is situated—the task of leadership is to move the institution into the future with a different and stronger character for students, faculty, and staff together. Finally, without optimism about the future, it may be extremely difficult to engage those most necessary for institutional change—faculty, staff and students who are committed to the institution's well-being and its certain continuation.

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Modeling Equity-Minded Leadership amid Crisis: The Call for Higher Education Governing Boards to Lead the Way

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Introduction

Early in 2020, COVID-19 pushed the academy to make changes large and small to meet the needs of its students. As institutions scrambled to respond to the pandemic, many staff members transitioned to working remotely; courses moved online; dorms closed; sports programs were postponed (and in some cases eliminated), and more. Higher education stakeholders looked to leaders for guidance, and these decision-makers often appeared hesitant and indecisive. The uncertainty is entrenched in questions that have long surrounded shared governance; in times before COVID-19, determining which governance actors oversaw various areas of the academy was difficult (Morphew, 1999). While changes in decision-making practices in higher education continue to unfold, sparse attention has been given to the implications of COVID-19 on postsecondary governance. The far-reaching and unprecedented influence of COVID-19 on higher education and beyond calls for a review of the strategic importance of governance, emphasizing the roles and responsibilities of board members.

The COVID-19 pandemic elucidates features of other major crises as well (MacTaggart, 2020). While COVID-19 posed a novel threat, the mainstays of racial justice and equity garnered much attention during this unprecedented time. As the country grappled with online learning and social distancing, deeply rooted racial tensions boiled over as the nation reacted to senseless killings of unarmed Black people like Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, and George Floyd in Minnesota. The unexpected global pandemic would not eclipse the longstanding pandemic of racism and anti-blackness. The convergence of these two issues poses a particular challenge for higher education leadership. College and university leaders are center stage as institutional stakeholders watch as the implications of both pandemics continue to unravel. As critical decisions are made, it is essential to question the role of governance actors in addressing such challenges.

In this paper, the author discusses the influence and implications of COVID-19 and racial inequity on postsecondary governance to consider how governance actors' pivotal roles and responsibilities call for us to reconsider higher education policy and practice. This reimagining of possibilities must have an explicit focus on equity given historical and COVID-19 related disparities experienced by marginalized populations. The author conceptualizes the growing need for new insights and perspectives related to higher education decision-making in the era of COVID-19 that might empower college and university board members to govern with an eye on equity with knowledge and confidence. University governance is a collaborative venture that should be a reliable vehicle for accountability, innovation, and progress, whether in a pandemic or not. To overcome today's most pressing institutional challenges (e.g., inequity), governance needs to be centered. At the same time, COVID-19 has forced us to reimagine the traditional ideas of governance and how this established structure of institutional control "works." Changes in the higher education environment unearth new questions

regarding the form and function of governance, especially during pandemics. The dual pandemics of inequity and COVID-19 place a singular focus on governing boards.

Governance and Governing Boards

Governance describes the way policies and macro-level decision making occur within higher education. It is a broad way to refer to institutions' structures and processes to make decisions, assign rights and responsibilities, understand relationships, and make clear authority patterns (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2004). Boards of higher education, those entities that maintain the ultimate authority over higher education institutions (Kaplan, 2005), warrant specific attention within university governance and are an integral part of institutions' governance structures. Understanding the role and efficacy of boards in dealing with change has never been more crucial (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges [AGB], 2013; Davies, 2011; Hirsch & Weber, 2001; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Eckel, 2004). However, most considerations of equity-related change are confined to the efforts of staff, faculty, and other campus stakeholders (Rall et al., 2020). Often left outside of critical conversations centering on race, governing boards do not know how to execute their role concerning equity-minded decision-making (Rall, 2020).

The reflective essay is used to contemplate paths for boards to guide and hold institutions accountable for influential circumstances in higher education, including equity-related initiatives and addressing crises such as those most recently manifest like COVID-19. Board members are needed now more than ever to recognize how their decisions affect not just policies and procedures but people. The board must be aware of how its decisions impact all people, but particularly those marginalized populations most severely and systematically disadvantaged by years of discrimination, racism, and prejudice. Decisions at the level of board governance invariably hold implications for marginalized groups; impacts on minoritized groups should be considered at every stage of decision-making to avoid unintended results. Board members can be difference-makers in addressing, pushing for, and assuring equity in higher education. Therefore, it is time for boards to purposefully enter and subsequently model and guide the equity conversation by focusing on inquiry and accountability at all times, but especially now in the wake of the pandemic. The academic leadership and governance strategies outlined to better promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) carry implications for policy and practice.

Governance Reconsidered: Priorities of the Trusteeship

Despite the essential tasks and roles assumed by boards of higher education, boards may not be well accustomed to lead amid crises and controversy. Based on the shared governance model, all legal authority in higher education originates from the governing board, but the board delegates most of this authority to the president, who then delegates authority over various parts of the university to other campus leaders (Olson, 2009). This delegation pattern does not mean that the board has all the knowledge, expertise, and experience necessary to execute that authority. Institutions need clear organizational strategies rooted in decisive and intentionally coordinated efforts to survive and flourish in the 21st century (OECD, 2003). Too often, and for too long, governing boards have been relegated to the sidelines of significant issues in higher education. The past decade has seen them forced into the headlines due to controversies at institutions like Penn State (Tierney & Rall, 2018), Michigan State (Méndez, 2020), and the University of Southern California (Ryan et al., 2018). 2020 again draws eyes to higher education boards not for what they did not do but for the potential of their actions. Making comparisons to what former USC president Steven Sample (2002) writes about with leadership, boards must shift from merely being trustees to actually doing the work of trusteeship. Gone are the days of

symbolic leadership from these influential decision-makers. Boards cannot only show leadership; they must lead.

Boards influence how institutions respond to external and internal pressures to meet increasing demands and expectations (Kerr & Gade, 1989). Recent scandals illustrate how public trust in higher education could be derailed if university officials do not correctly address crises. However, not all public trust is lost in higher education considering university scandals; the dual pandemics of racism and COVID-19 provide colleges and universities an opportunity to re-establish their commitment to the general public and heighten institutional accountability. Institutional leaders must be attentive to risks and demonstrate leadership through their actions (AGB, 2014). By assessing their role in governance, boards can (re)position themselves as key institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 2011) in dealing with university challenges and leading the way to re-establishing trust in institutions of higher education. The focus on the governing boards' role is essential because regardless of "...the delegation of authority to the administration and faculty...the board still retains the ultimate responsibility" for what happens on campus (AGB, 1998, p. 3).

Higher education is a crisis-prone enterprise; the current crises force higher education leaders to address the present challenges and those preexisting crises that higher education has yet to address (MacTaggart, 2020). Changes in the higher education environment unearth new questions regarding the form and function of shared governance (Morphew, 1999). Accordingly, it is crucial that campus leaders critically reflect on how their decisions are made and consider the potential impact of the decisions (Eckel & Kezar, 2006). To survive, institutions must be responsive to their environments (Birnbaum, 1988). The board must be multifaceted to be reactive, proactive, and adaptive all at the same time. The mixed responses to COVID-19 and racial injustice are not new. Scholarship has demonstrated that quick and dramatic changes in higher education can prompt haphazard adaptation on behalf of faculty and administration (Morphew, 1999). Recent events in higher education related to the pandemic warrant a much needed (re)introduction to the board to show the advantageous possibilities. As a starting point for this (re)introduction, boards may want to (re)establish themselves as the standard of higher education answerability by plainly asserting their positions in a timely fashion when institutions face crises.

While institutions and their leaders often do not have control over what happens with a pandemic such as COVID-19, they do have control over how they respond, how quickly they respond, and how they move to align their words with actions for DEI related issues. If the examples mentioned above have taught us anything, it is that inaction, indecision, and delay have proven to be problematic. Examples exist to demonstrate that higher education can do better. It is no longer permissible to settle for doing things right; our leaders must do the right thing at the right time. For this change to occur, boards, in particular, need to take stock of their role in identifying and addressing challenges. The board specifically must enter DEI related conversations. Their past absence in such matters may lead individuals to assume that they do not have a role to play in this necessary work. However, boards of trustees do matter for DEI initiatives and progress. Higher education stakeholders should expect that boards will help lead and navigate their institutions through the current (and future) crises. So how do boards leverage their expertise? To what extent, if at all, can universities use their experiences in dealing with university pandemics to heighten accountability and re-establish public trust in higher education?

Through culturally sustaining governance, board members make central decisions on behalf of higher education institutions simultaneously as they focus on what is equitable (Rall et al., 2020). As seen in Table 1, there are five roles that boards can assume in equity-centered decision making. At any given time, boards can fluctuate from serving in one or all of these capacities. However, in the new COVID-19 environment, boards have had to move from the bottom of the table to the top to take a

more hands-on role. Boards must purposefully guide the institution in alignment with the campus mission. Via the lens of COVID-19, however, the impact of board action carries implications for marginalized populations. Ideally, boards will embody the "initiator" role more than they have in the past; they will be able to respond to COVID-19 and maintain a focus on equity to not further marginalize these groups. An emphasis on "both/and" not "either/or" is key; the demand for maximizing institutional decisions and the demand that equity is prioritized are not mutually exclusive, and one need not adversely impact the other (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Equity-mindedness requires boards to be deliberate in their decision-making to avoid the risk of increasing inequity (Bensimon, 2018).

Table 1. *5 Roles Boards Assume in the Pursuit of Equity*

Role	Description
Initiator	Boards spearhead a policy, practice, or procedure to maximize equity on campus
Catalyzer	Boards follow the impetus of others (e.g., community groups or campus staff) to improve equitable outcomes
Bystander	Boards fail to get involved in the movement towards equity and continue "business as usual"; boards neither *intentionally* advance nor impede critical equity work
Inhibitor	Boards slow, divert, or problematize the need for initiatives rooted in equity
Barrier	Boards directly create a policy, practice, or procedure that challenges the advancement of equity

*Adapted from Rall et al., 2020

An Example of Equity-Minded Leadership amid Crisis

The California State University System (CSU), the nation's largest four-year public university system in the United States (Celly & Knepper, 2010), is also known for having one of the most diverse student bodies in the country. The CSU was the first institution to announce it would keep its campus closed in the fall of 2020 in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It was later determined that the CSU would remain virtual for the entire 2020-2021 academic year. While many thought the decision was too rash, the CSU did not shy away from leading academia in a time when uncertainty was the norm. Across the 23 institutions in the system, campuses worked to abate the spread of COVID-19 while not sacrificing the caliber of access and education for its most vulnerable student population, including a population with nearly half Pell-eligible students. The CSU invested millions in offering current students digital services and equipment, including free Wi-Fi, software, devices, and provided emergency grants via the CSU Cares Program. For prospective students, the institution extended the deadline for undergraduate applications. It temporarily suspended the use of ACT/SAT tests in determining admission eligibility for all CSU campuses for the next academic year.

The CSU system released A Statement of Inclusion on March 12, 2020:

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational values for the California State University, and every member of the CSU community is encouraged to exemplify those values. This is especially true as incidents of bias and xenophobia have

increased during the Coronavirus outbreak. Any such actions or attitudes, ranging from microaggressions to overt harassment, have no place within the California State University; students, staff and faculty are actively encouraged to reject and denounce xenophobia and bigotry, and to treat all with dignity and respect.

The system, led by Chancellor White, declared early on that DEI would remain the focus of its operations even while all eyes across the nation had determined COVID-19 was the focal challenge of the day. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSU evinced this focus on equity when, on September 2020, it named Joseph I. Castro, the "first native Californian, first Mexican-American and first CSU president promoted to the position" as the CSU's eighth chancellor (Smith, 2020). The CSU board of trustees executed this decision—a selection that was not only equity-minded but also catapulted the board as an "initiator," bringing about demonstrative and symbolic change to long-held norms and traditions of how university leadership looks. The CSU further identified as a "catalyzer" of ongoing DEI initiatives when Castro committed to addressing disparities in graduation rates during his leadership via The Graduation Initiative 2025. Impacts of the CSU efforts manifest in surges in enrollment numbers and a record 85.5% retention where first-time students continued to their second year (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020).

The tone at the top matters; now, more than ever before, institutional leaders must be attentive to risks and demonstrate leadership through their actions (AGB, 2014). Some boards utilize an understanding, recognition, or prioritization of equity in their decision-making (Rall et al., 2020). However, institutions across the nation can do much better with making sure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice are understood and valued at the highest levels in academe; the board is fundamental in this effort. 2020 ought to serve as a reminder that governing boards are tasked with guiding and overseeing change while simultaneously assessing and meeting the needs for action and deliberation to best accommodate the complexities of higher education governance (Hill et al., 2001). The board has yet to establish what role it can, should, or needs to play in precarious situations such as these. In asserting its position and role in these critical times, boards can hold other higher education stakeholders accountable by leading by example. Today's higher education climate necessitates that boards do more and ultimately be more than they have in the past.

Conclusion

Colleges and universities cannot return to the former status quo; institutional leaders must prepare for an uncertain future. An integral component of that preparation is action. In recent history, the public has found itself outside of the knowledge of what trustees do both regularly and in serious moments of conflict. Relatively recent events in higher education can serve as an inflection point for the boards' role in governance and leadership going forward. The enhanced clarity around the board can also call us to hold the entire institution of higher education to advanced standards of accountability. It is important to note that presently, inactivity or slow activity makes a clear statement that reverberates throughout higher education. In other words, by not publicly acknowledging or addressing pressing issues facing higher education, boards can be considered to have chosen to make a statement through their inaction. Silence is often just as powerful a declaration as any verbal or written stance. Boards need to make active, clear, and consistent responses to major issues facing colleges and universities that no one wants to talk about and deal with not just because they can, but because they should, and because no one else is stepping up to fill the void. Boards need to lead the way. And while boards have traditionally operated in the realm of behind-the-scenes control, moving into the forefront now can allow boards to lay the foundation and lead the charge for accountability in higher education. The

public is listening, watching, and anticipating who will lead higher education during this critical time. The board stands in the right position at this critical juncture to (re)establish institutional, ethical, and educational priorities. And while the meaning behind such an assertion of identity is grand, the first step is unassuming; it all can start with a basic (re)introduction to the role of the board in demonstrating that equity should be normalized, prioritized, institutionalized, and valued whether the institution is in a pandemic or not.

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Parallel Pandemics: Leveraging the Interest Convergence of Higher Education Leadership Towards an Equity Grounded Response to COVID-19

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Introduction

This essay focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to rage in the United States and its effect on college students. Through the examination of literature and educational leadership theory, I consider how interest convergence can be leveraged to alleviate the oppression that Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) college students have historically experienced in higher education. I identify an opportunity for future research, which can expand the academy's knowledge and practice regarding culturally relevant decision making. I conclude with steps which higher education leaders can take to combat racism in their respective organization.

The year 2020 has become a memorable year for many in higher education, and not for pleasant reasons. In the early spring of 2020, a global pandemic collectively known as COVID-19 disrupted nearly every aspect of life. As identified in a call for research by the American Association of University Administrators (2020), Higher Education in the United States experienced significant disruption in its ability to teach and ensure its students' and staff's health and well-being. Also, racial tension in the United States has become significantly elevated due to police brutality and explicit acts of violence towards the African American community. Furthermore, research shows that Students of Color are already experiencing significant marginalization on a college campus in the form of Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) (Smith et al., 2007). As such, BIPOC students are experiencing parallel pandemics. One regarding health and one concerning racial equity and social justice.

This essay focuses on the intersection of adaptive leadership theory and crisis leadership theory. Foundational to the research, evidence is presented of the challenges students of Color face in a higher education setting. Additional studies highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges. I present Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework to explain how students of Color are victims of systemic racism (Crenshaw, 1991). The tenant of CRT, interest convergence, allows for understanding how racism dictates that BIPOC students' needs receive attention only when they align with those of White students. The Smith et al., (2007) work of Racial Battle Fatigue is a robust framework for demonstrating the psychosocial stress that results from being a minoritized student on a predominantly white campus (PWI). Lastly, power-conscious framework explains how leaders can support students of Color. For an adaptive leadership response that is grounded in equity to exist, there must be an understanding of how power, privilege, and oppression sustain the inertia of White supremacy (Linder, 2018)

Attending Framework

Critical Race Theory, grounded in legal scholarship, serves as a tool to discuss how systemic racism exists in contemporary American life (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Furthermore, it is built upon historical writings regarding race's social construction (Du Bois 1899; Du Bois 1903; Weber 1930). It is an essential guide in understanding how students of Color experience, perceive, and understand racism in higher education. There are five pillars that serve to uphold CRT and offer insight into how campus leadership can leverage the theory to foster diversity and inclusion (Crenshaw et al., 1995) (Hiraldo, 2010).

- **Counter-Story Telling**: Because of racism, minoritized people are often silenced. Counter-Story Telling allows for marginalized stakeholders' voices to be heard and creates a more transparent view of a campus climate.
- **The Permanence of Racism:** Racism establishes the power of White people over people of Color in all aspects of American society, including education. Higher Education leadership often implements diversity initiatives while simultaneously ignoring racism, resulting with ineffectiveness and reinforcement of racism.
- **Whiteness as Property:** Because of entrenched racism, Whiteness is viewed as an exclusive membership. In higher education, people of Color are still excluded from circles of influence, even after earning a Ph.D.
- **Interest Convergence:** Policy actors are motivated to enact programs that benefit students of Color only when they align with the needs of White students.
- **Critique of Liberalism:** This serves to critique the "color-blind" mentality of higher education leadership. As a privileged identity, Whites can choose when to see color, however, students of Color cannot. Colorblindness allows for racism to be ignored or only addressed when convenient.

Building upon CRT of higher education (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995), Patton (2016) states that higher education is culpable in creating and sustaining educational inequity. The researcher offers three propositions to explain how racism/White supremacy is ingrained in higher education. These ideas are crucial for campus leadership to begin disrupting racism and other forms of systemic oppression.

- **Proposition 1**: Racism/White supremacy is ineradicable from the current form of higher education in the United States.
- **Proposition 2**: From the beginning, higher education has promoted the social construction of race through legislation and the use of violence to uphold jurisprudence.
- **Proposition 3**: Epistemological racism created in higher education infects law, science, and religion and has historically been used to propel oppression.

Smith et al., (2007) describe Racial Battle Fatigue as the physiological and psychological strain placed upon students of Color as a result of racism on a college campus. It is akin to the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that may develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. The research shows microaggressions, the subtle and constant racial insults, that students of Color face are what cause lasting emotional pain. As such, students of Color are in constant crisis with feelings of frustration, anger, exhaustion, physical avoidance, emotional withdrawal, and an inability to escape a racist environment. The detrimental effects of RBF create barriers for students of Color which significantly hinder retention, persistence, and completion of higher education.

Power conscious leadership must consider privilege and oppression when interacting with followers from minoritized identities (Linder, 2018). Power can work to uphold or dismantle systems of oppression. As such, the focus of this theory is on the interconnection between power and systems of oppression. Built upon the ideas of critical consciousness and intersectionality, power consciousness implores campus leadership to dismantle systems that allow Whites to hoard power, thus redistributing academic capacity to minoritized people. Confronting both the origins and symptoms of oppression is a key consideration of this theory. There are six tenants which uphold this theory (Linder, 2018).

- **Engagement:** Scholars and activists must immerse in critical consciousness and self-awareness.
- **Narrative:** The historical context of oppression must be considered.
- **Reaction:** Scholars and activists must alter their behavior after developing awareness.
- **Action:** Uncover dominant group behavior that is using power and privilege to sustain oppression.
- **Follow-through:** Expose oppressive behavior in systems and organizations.
- **Unity:** A firm commitment to work side by side to end oppression.

Leadership Theory

As described in Khan (2017), institutions of higher education exist in a compound environment. The multi-facets include external influence, emerging technology, competition, and evolving student demographics. In order to thrive in such an environment, university leadership must be supportive and flexible. This calls for adaptive leadership, a change-agent with the ability to navigate hostility, volatility, and make objective decisions with the interest of students above the institution (Yuki & Mahsud, 2010). Adaptive leaders go beyond the follower-leader relationship; they also factor in the external pressures from which the leader and follower draw influence. Adaptive leaders are experts in problem identification, isolating the issue, and formulating a solution (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive leaders motivate followers to act and confront challenges directly. Offering a critical lens criticism of adaptive leadership, some higher education institutions are resistant to an adaptive leadership approach because it challenges values, beliefs, and norms (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Higher education institutions are deeply rooted in racism and work to uphold the inertia of White supremacy (Patton, 2016).

Although COVID-19 is a novel occurrence, the study of crisis leadership is a valuable and timely tool to introduce for this research. Crisis mitigation is a robust metric when evaluating an organizational leader (Fortunato et al., 2018). Followers expect competent leaders who can multitask, scrutinize options, bring in resources, respond quickly and definitively, and maintain open communication. The research highlights three critical areas: stakeholder relationships, crisis response, and sensemaking. A crisis can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative perceptions from stakeholders. In a higher education context, stakeholders include all faculty, staff, parents, current and future students, as well as outside influence such as donors and alumni. Appropriate crisis management dictates that stakeholders' interests should be at the forefront of importance when deciding. In higher education, these interests may often overlap or, at times, contradict. The alliance between leadership and stakeholders is key during times of crisis. A timely crisis response is necessary and can mitigate or contribute to harm, depending on management (Brown et al., 2015). A strong crisis leader uses communication that is quick, steady, and transparent. Lastly, a leader must help the followers make sense of what occurred during a crisis. The process of sensemaking is ongoing and occurs during and after a crisis. Sensemaking allows for healing and a path forward (Fortunato et al., 2018)

Challenges for Students of Color

The past several decades has shown a measurable increase in acceptance concerning interracial marriage, school integration, and college admissions (Eschmann, 2019). However, the reduction of racial prejudice in these categories has not been paired with a curtailment of implicit racial bias. This is evident by the striking racial disparities in the number of people of Color held in custody by the U.S. prison system. Alexander (2012) postulates the crisis of mass incarceration for people of Color is due to the criminal justice system being infected by racial bias. Elucidating towards the student experience, Eschmann (2019) takes a close look at how implicit racism emerges from the shadows using internet-based communication. Delineating from the lived experiences of undergraduate students of Color, the author claims an increase in harmful racial discourse. Racism materializes in an online learning environment due to secret identities, reduced moderation capacity, and fewer perceived social repercussions. As a result, students of Color experience marginalization by the resurgence of antiquated racist ideology.

Jenkins et al. (2020) offer first-hand accounts of anti-Blackness experiences at PWI's. The authors, all men of Color, experienced racial profiling by campus police. Contrary to administrators' popular and empty diversity statements, Black male bodies are viewed as an inappropriate addition to the student body composition in a White space such as a college campus. The unwarranted accusations, presumptions of guilt, and over-surveillance towards students of Color create a negative experience and, ultimately, feelings of racial estrangement. Counter narratives, such as this, are crucial in explaining the hostile campus racial climate students of Color consistently face.

A campus racial climate is the sum of all parts related to communal perspectives, awareness, practices, and assumptions surrounding race, ethnicity, and diversity (Hurtado et al., 2008). Furthermore, a campus racial climate is complicated, involves numerous stakeholders, and varies in proportion. The stakeholder complexity stems from the relationship between students, faculty, staff, and administration. The researchers state that a campus climate is ever-changing and is experienced differently based on a student's identity. Consequently, persons from a privileged identity influence the climate, while persons from a minoritized background are governed by it.

BIPOC college students' mental health is reduced by the experience of racial discrimination in the form of racial microaggressions, which are unintentional and often covert (Nadal et al., 2011). Unlike open discrimination, there is no legal protection against implicit bias. As such, college administrators have difficulty holding oppressors accountable and recognizing victimization (Nadal et al., 2014). Students of Color are tormented by the ever-present microaggressions on a college campus. While not bearing full responsibility, these experiences lead to a lower retention rate, persistence, and completion of higher education for students of Color.

Applebaum (2019) communicates that campus leadership has overly relied on anti-bias training as a means to eradicate racist, sexist, homophobic, and other oppressive behaviors. The investigator argues that anti-bias training is often employed as a "quick fix" with little regard to addressing root issues of oppression. Implicit bias training that is mandatory and delivered as a "canned curriculum" is counterproductive and results in more oppressive behavior. Well-meaning administrators discuss how implicit bias affects students but fails to establish why it exists. Research suggests that microaggression education is perhaps a more powerful tool in improving campus racial climates (Applebaum, 2019). This is done by refocusing attention on the aggregate effects of racist behavior and racism as a system rather than blaming individual beliefs and behavior.

Research spotlights that the COVID-19 pandemic has generally increased levels of stress and depression among the public. Yet, it is still unclear how the Coronavirus has impacted college students in the United States (Wang et al., 2020). The scientists used a mixed-method survey to gather and

analyze responses from over two thousand undergraduate and graduate students in the American Southwest. Of great alarm, a large portion of students reported an increase in feelings of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Additionally, students appear concerned about their academics, health, and lifestyle. University leadership must take immediate steps to understand and address these issues since the pandemic's length and severity are still unknown.

First-hand accounts from first-generation college students demonstrate unique challenges associated with this population and COVID-19 (www.cnbc.com/collegevoices2020). Research from the *Institute of Education Sciences* shows 1 in 4 first-generation college students claim a household income of $20,000 or less. Only 6% of non-first-generation college students fall into the same financial category. The data is used to contextualize that the vast majority of first-generation college students must maintain full-time employment in addition to full-time course loads. When stay-at-home orders went into effect, these students faced a difficult situation. Many continue to work, at great risk of contracting the virus, in order to pay tuition and utilities.

Suggested Directions and Opportunities to Expand

While college students of Color have faced historical challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly added to the burdens. Congress passed a Coronavirus relief bill, known as the CARES Act (NPR, 2020). A closer look at the appropriation shows $12.5 billion in funding towards PWI institutions, $1 billion towards minority-serving institutions such as a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), and a meager $350 million for small/private colleges. In 2018, 53% of the U.S. college undergraduate population self-identified as White (United States Census Bureau, 2018, RELEASE NUMBER CB18-192). On a large scale, it is evident that White students are experiencing physiological and psychological strain from COVID-19. This trauma is not equivalent to the harm caused by systemic racism. However, it is amendable, as is the Racial Battle Fatigue of non-White students. Viewing the response through a critical lens, the tenant of interest convergence is clearly displayed, and it may explain the motivation behind CARES funding for higher education. The White power-elites have acknowledged the crisis and have responded with immediate and immense financial resources.

The CARES Act dictates that 50% of the relief money must be spent on students who have been adversely affected by Coronavirus, yet it does not explicitly state how it is to be spent. History demonstrates, we cannot rely on leadership to equitably distribute the CARES funding without offering our own engagement and activism (Linder, 2018). Knowledge on this topic will fundamentally change future responses and, ultimately, the perception and experience of higher education for minoritized students. Further research, using critical framework, of leadership decisions is necessary. What are the qualitative characteristics and quantitative measurements of an equity centered, adaptive leadership response to COVID-19? Adaptive leaders are at a fork in the road, one path upholds the status quo, the other is an intentional effort to correct the systemic inequity. Now, more than ever, it is incumbent upon higher education leadership to take action towards protecting these vulnerable students.

For higher education administrators challenged by the task of placing the "how" into the context of now, I suggest raising and maintaining attention to these issues by committing to anti-racist praxis. Accordingly, Choo (2020) pinpoints six steps which can be taken to combat racism in higher education.

1. Campus leadership must set goals which specifically articulate action and change in order to avoid the pitfalls of abstract generalization such as "being an anti-racist campus".

2. Leadership must name the ways racism exists within the organization. Clear language must be used to inform all stake-holders that the goal is to end racism not to change "culture" or "build unity".

3. Leadership must establish a target outcome that can be measured by both quantitative and qualitative instruments so progress can be tracked.

4. Leadership must be diligent in identifying racism in every place, process, and practice. Racism is present in mascots, artwork, faculty promotion and tenure practice, student clubs/organizations, and resource allocation.

5. Colleges and universities should transform the racial composition of faculty, including the administration, to mirror the racial composition of the student population. Failing to do so indicates hypocrisy and insincerity to students of Color.

6. Campus leadership must invest financial resources in dismantling racism. Sustainable resources must be invested in pipeline programs for people of Color to assume faculty and administrator positions.

Acknowledgment

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Sticking to the Plan: How We're Navigating COVID-19 and Racial Equity at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside

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University of Wisconsin-Parkside

Since March 2020, higher education leaders across the U.S. have prioritized the health and safety of their campuses. While the well-being of students and colleagues is always a priority, rarely has it occupied as much attention on a sustained basis by so many as has been demanded by the COVID-19 pandemic. This essay describes how the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, a public, regional, comprehensive university in Southeast Wisconsin fared during 2020. We describe how maintaining focus on the preeminent goal in our 2025 strategic framework helped us to "stick to the plan" as we coped with difficult conditions associated with the pandemic and racial justice. Beyond the challenges presented by COVID-19, the shooting of Jacob Blake by a hometown police officer in Kenosha sparked civil unrest, several nights of looting in city neighborhoods, commitment of State and federal forces to protect citizens and property, and international attention for our collective failure to sufficiently address structural racism. In Southeastern Wisconsin, the "twin pandemics" of COVID and structural racism were experienced as forcefully here as anywhere in our nation.

First, a little background. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside is one of 13 universities in the University of Wisconsin System. Our 53rd year finds us in a period of widening inequality among historically marginalized and privileged citizens and our democracy straining to confront its challenges. Of course, every age and place faces challenges and that's why the decision was made over five decades ago to build a public university in Southeastern Wisconsin, a decision described by one of our emerita faculty as an inherently optimistic and forward-thinking act also made at a time of great turbulence in the United States. UW-Parkside was founded to prepare college-educated citizens for a manufacturing region that historically didn't need them (but increasingly would).

From its beginnings, UW-Parkside embodied the Wisconsin Idea first described in 1905 by University of Wisconsin President, Charles Van Hise – "I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every family in the state". UW-Parkside was thus conceived as a steward of place and this vision is even more true today. The campus is committed to the public purposes of higher education and its expansive community engagement efforts are guided by a vision of reciprocal partnerships among the university and communities of Southeastern Wisconsin. The effects of COVID and racism that assaulted our region were thus keenly felt by students, staff, faculty and alumni.

Focusing on Priorities Keeps Us on Course

Collins and Lazier (2020) note, "If the first two decades of the 21st Century have taught us anything, it's that uncertainty is chronic; instability is permanent; disruption is common; and we can neither predict or govern events. There will be no "new normal"; there will only be a continuous series of "not normal" episodes, defying prediction and unforeseen by most of us until they happen

(p.15)." At the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, we have dealt with ongoing uncertainty by assembling a high-functioning and collaborative leadership team, what Collins (2011) describes as prioritizing "first who, then what" and getting the right people in the right seats on the bus. Our success in navigating the twin pandemics also lies, of course, in the dedication of our faculty, staff, and students. In mid-March, the Chancellor's Cabinet transitioned to form the Pandemic Response Executive Team. Campus leadership prioritized preserving health and safety and maintaining teaching, learning, and research in order to "stick to the plan". We retained our focus on the preeminent goal in our strategic framework to produce 50 percent more graduates annually by 2025, and the convergent and aligned goals in our Academic and Civic Action Plans.

The Pandemic Response Executive Team met for 35 straight days in spring 2020. We reinforced guiding principles -- *Live by the Platinum Rule, Keep Students at Center of All Decisions, Support and Trust Each Other, Work for the Overall Good of the University, Be Open to Change, Maintain a Fun Work Environment, Remain Calm, Absorb Chaos, Give Back Hope, Rest, Exercise, Practice Good Hygiene, and Laugh Often*. These served us well. For the remainder of the summer and fall, we met twice a week to review pandemic-related business and operations.

During the University's 50th anniversary in 2018-19, we challenged ourselves to

consider "what's next?" Priorities were aligned with those of both the University of Wisconsin System, the greatest needs of our state and region, and our own culture and aims. With the proportion of working adults in Wisconsin declining, the number of high school graduates decreasing, and growing demand for employees with higher education degrees, we realized that the most powerful place-based responsibility we have is to increase education attainment in our region, especially among historically underserved populations. This is why we set the bold goal to increase the number of annual graduates of our institution by 50 percent by 2025. In the demographically slow-growing upper Midwest, this may be audacious, but it is keeping us focused on what we consider most important. To achieve this, the campus's strategic framework prioritizes: 1) Providing a transformative education, 2) Continuously improving student success, 3) partnering with our communities, and 4) Becoming a "Best Place to Work" in southeast Wisconsin.

UW-Parkside's 2025 Strategic Framework aligns with the 2017-2020 Academic Plan. We adopted our first academic plan in university history in 2012, entitled "An Academic Plan to Lead UW-Parkside Toward 2020: Aiming High and Making Excellence Inclusive". Upon starting as provost in spring 2016, Rob Ducoffe initiated campus-wide consultations and conducted surveys to collect feedback from faculty, staff, students, and governance leaders on the status of the existing Academic Plan. He wanted to understand how it had been used, to gain insights into how the next academic plan might build on its progenitor, and to seek feedback on a planning process that participants would consider effective. Of the 24 goals in the 2012 – 2020 Academic Plan, 11 were considered by at least one of the six constituent groups surveyed as among the top five in terms of their importance. These goals converged in meaningful ways into four consolidated goals; to increase student success, to grow enrollment, to enhance curriculum relevance, and to strengthen campus community. These four goals have provided needed focus for our efforts in academic and student affairs and were therefore seen as a useful foundation for both the 2025 Strategic Framework and the university's bold goal.

In addition to aligning the 2025 Strategic Framework with the Academic Plan, the University adopted a Civic Action Plan to guide its engagement efforts. The plan was crafted by a team of faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners who collected input over the course of nine months via focus groups, facilitated discussions, and surveys of students, faculty, staff, and community members. The aims of the Civic Action Plan are: 1) To prepare graduates to be knowledgeable and active citizens; 2) To position the university as an authentic partner; and 3) To build and sustain a diverse, inclusive,

and equitable culture on campus and in the community. These commitments have never been more important.

UW-Parkside sits at the center of the communities of Kenosha and Racine, Wisconsin, both situated along the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor. After being ranked the third-worst metropolitan area in the U.S. for Black Americans in 2018 and fourth-worst in 2017, Racine has now been ranked as the second-worst city for Black Americans in the U.S., according to a recent 24/7 Wall St. study (https://247wallst.com/special-report/2019/11/05/the-worst-cities-for-Black-americans-5/4/).
Milwaukee is the worst. The study consists of eight race-based gaps in socioeconomic outcomes including median household income, poverty, adult high school attainment, bachelor's degree attainment, homeownership, unemployment, incarceration, and mortality. Two of these metrics have to do with educational attainment, and the rest are either predictors or outcomes. The University is therefore an essential strategic partner in improving these outcomes.

Our COVID Chronology

A few key dates capture how the UW-Parkside community responded to the twin pandemics during 2020.

March 13th -- Pivot to Virtual Learning

Midway through spring semester as COVID-19 reached Southeastern Wisconsin, the UW-Parkside community went into *triage* mode and prioritized the health of the campus community and student success. On March 13th, University leadership decided to close the campus and start spring break one week earlier to create a few additional days for instructors to transition their courses to remote learning. The governor implemented a "safer at home" order. Most faculty and staff began working from home and residential students moved out of the residence halls. The campus was closed to all but essential personnel and all remaining university operations pivoted to remote delivery.

Priority was placed on maintaining the curriculum and support services so students stayed on their pathways to graduation. Faculty and instructional staff converted all their courses to remote delivery over two weeks, 1,566 course sections. These changes affected 85 percent of all undergraduate credit hours and 24 percent of master's credit hours that were being delivered in face-to-face format at the time. Efforts focused on shoring up the overall skill level of faculty, instructional staff, and adjunct colleagues by ensuring maximum access to three foundational modules; 1) Basic Canvas Training, 2) Blackboard Collaborative Ultra to facilitate interaction, and 3) Kaltura that permits video and audio capture. As online learning can be more independent and autonomous than learning in face-to-face settings, extra efforts were made by campus faculty and staff to "stay connected" to students to ensure they felt supported, to understand their needs, and to respond as best as possible to help ensure they persisted successfully through the completion of the semester. Many instructors adjusted their grading to accommodate the unprecedented nature of the health crisis.

A series of other academic and student success adjustments were made including expanding use of Credit/No Credit grades, closing residence halls for most students, removing advising holds for students in good academic standing, canceling study abroad, supplying computers and hotspots to students and staff who needed them, canceling in-person Spring Commencement and other events, delivering all course evaluations electronically with additional questions to assess transition issues, suspending use of required course evaluation data for personnel decisions, extending the tenure clock, extending admissions deadlines, waiving placement testing exams for incoming students, accepting unofficial transcripts and ACT/SAT scores for admission decisions, reducing the application fee, launching an emergency grant fund, moving new student orientations online, suspending many position

searches, discontinuing many student employment positions, ceasing university-related travel, implementing furloughs among non-instructional staff, and refunding housing, dining, and parking fees.

From mid-March, when the campus was closed and the curriculum was moved entirely online, to the end of the semester, UW-Parkside's net headcount enrollment fell by 20 students, or under .5 percent and remained 5.4 percent above the level from the previous year. The university community responded to COVID-19 in a determined, thoughtful, and collaborative manner and helped students, 80 percent of whom are commuters, stay engaged with their studies in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic.

May 16th -- Largest Graduating Class in History

On May 16th, UW-Parkside celebrated its first virtual Commencement and graduated the largest spring class in its history. The number of graduates increased 13 percent from 776 in May 2019 to 876 in May 2020. This progress is driven by innovative faculty and staff who are motivated by the campus's bold goal and to serve more students through new programs and a continuously strengthening student-centered culture.

By sticking to the plan over the last three years, UW-Parkside's enrollment has steadily grown and is now at a 7-year high. Master's-level enrollment has increased from about 3% to almost 15% of overall headcount mostly through growth in online programs in business, healthcare, and information technology that are offered in collaboration with partners.

At the undergraduate level, the primary focus has been on improving graduation rates through implementing best practice strategies at scale in high impact practices, credit momentum, math pathways, co-requisite remediation, meta majors, technology-assisted advising, and emergency financial aid grants. Systems and processes have been changed to remove unnecessary barriers that are not predictive of learning and to provide additional support. Examples include: changes in admission standards that emphasize prior academic performance rather than test-score results, and adoption of multiple measures for determining placement in mathematics that have significantly reduced assignment of students to remedial coursework and improved subsequent performance in required math courses. We also launched a Promise program to ensure students with uncovered financial need are supported, and expanded mentoring for freshman students of color to help them persist.

The latest 6-year graduation rate is 45 percent above the university's historic average and has set three record highs over the last four years. The graduation rates for African American students have increased substantially and are about double the 10-year average though they remain lower than rates for White and Hispanic students. The overall graduation rate for students of color is at a historic high. Seven-in-ten of our baccalaureate graduates are experiencing two or more high impact practices whose quality we are steadily attempting to understand and improve.

We are deepening our effort to mitigate the effects of systemic racism by committing to eliminating equity gaps and improving outcomes for historically underrepresented students. As part of this commitment, UW-Parkside is increasing enrollment of Hispanic students with the goal of earning a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation. This work has not been disrupted by the pandemic. UW-Parkside is currently at the "Emerging HSI" level (18 percent Hispanic enrollment), the only public university in Wisconsin with this designation. Once earned, HSI status will further strengthen our ability to serve Latino/a/x students, while being attentive that such efforts not undermine emphasis on African American and other underrepresented minority students.

July 5th – Budget Reductions

By summer, we realized the pandemic would continue well into the 2020-21 academic year and budget reductions were needed. Campus leaders engaged proactively in a budget-trimming process to ensure the campus remained financially strong. Long-term reductions in state funding, lower revenues from housing and auxiliaries, fee remissions, and increased expenses from the pandemic made these adjustments necessary.

The vice chancellor for finance and administration lead the budget reduction process with the support of the Chancellor's Cabinet. The targeted base budget reduction was nine percent. Campus leaders do not believe in across-the-board cuts and prioritized delivery of the academic mission. Academic departments made reductions of six percent. Student affairs, enrollment services, athletics, and administrative units providing direct service to students reduced their budgets by nine percent. All other administrative units made reductions of 12 percent. These reductions resulted in furloughs, lay-offs, staff restructuring, and in reductions in essential services.

At the end of six months in the fiscal year, we have a balanced budget. With the December 2020 COVID-19 Relief Bill, we expect to be able to meet increased expenses from implementing pandemic protocols. These difficult decisions have provided some financial "breathing room" as the pandemic wears on and impacts University operations. While always wrenching, the realignments in our base expenditures have helped ensure stability in the six-year financial forecasts we use and, importantly, preserve the budgetary cushion we rely on to support investments in strategic priorities and seed new ideas.

August 23rd – Racism in the Spotlight

Just before the start of the fall semester, as we prepared to reopen the campus from the Governor's Safer at Home Order, restart classes, and reopen residence halls, an officer-involved shooting occurred just a few miles away. The video of Jacob Blake, a Black man from Illinois, being shot by a White Kenosha police officer, went viral on social media. Protests began. From watching other cities respond to protests, violence, and civil unrest, we found ourselves in the middle of our own community crisis.

Diversity is a valued part of UW-Parkside's mission as well as its reality. Currently, 37 percent of our students are people of color, about 60 percent are first in their families to attend college, and approximately one-in-five are nontraditional aged 25 and older. We celebrate the diversity of our students and how this adds to the richness and engagement students experience when they attend UW-Parkside.

We have increasingly recognized, however, that diversity among our students is insufficient to achieve our goals and, as campus leaders, we need to do much more to promote social justice and racial equality. Particularly as a regional, public institution of higher education, we have an obligation to close equity gaps and confront racial disparities. Unfortunately, our efforts have been ad hoc and the burden to influence change has been shouldered by too few of our colleagues. We all have a responsibility to better understand how our action and inaction contributes to systemic racism and to commit to doing more to resolve these disparities.

To demonstrate our commitment and to more fully consider the structures, policies, and practices that have historically disadvantaged students of color, we revived our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Council in January 2020. This group of faculty, staff, administrators, and students has been meeting to assess our current efforts to improve our campus climate and develop an integrated action plan for equity, diversity, and inclusion. We must deepen our commitment to being a student-centered campus by removing the barriers that impede the success of our students of color, by recruiting more colleagues of color to help in this work, and by continuing to build a campus culture that fully realizes

these possibilities. In alignment with our 2025 Strategic Framework, Academic Plan, and Civic Action Plan we have:

- Allocated resources for faculty and staff to participate in training on implicit bias, inclusion, equity, cultural competencies, and equitable teaching and learning practices;
- Completed planning for a campus climate survey to be conducted in spring 2021;
- Supported the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council in developing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan;
- Committed to increasing the diversity of our workforce to reflect the composition of our student population (it's currently about half as diverse as our student body);
- Implemented student success strategies to close equity gaps and improve success rates of our underrepresented students;
- Partnered with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Carthage College, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and corporate partner EAB as the first region in the nation to join the *Moon Shot for Equity*, an initiative to eliminate gaps in graduation rates among White and historically underserved student populations in our region by 2030. The four institutions will participate in equity-minded leadership development, collaborate with national exemplars Georgia State and University of Houston, continue to implement best practices at scale, contribute to student success scholarship, maximize use of EAB's predictive analytics platform, and learn from one another via regional and national convenings;
- Created the "Ranger Reach Out" effort to connect the UW-Parkside community to cleanup and rebuilding efforts in the city of Kenosha;
- Utilized the Al Guskin Center for Community and Business Engagement at UW-Parkside as a point of contact for business and community partners seeking support from the university and coordinating community-based learning projects; and
- Offered a *Community Conversation Series on Rebuilding Kenosha* by faculty member, Dr. Jonathan Shailor, and students in the Certificate Program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. These facilitated conversations with community members, permitted participants to learn more about others' experiences, understand others' needs, discover how to best serve one another, identify the issues that we can work on together, and take actions that strengthen our community.

September 2, 2020 – Fall 2020 Begins

Amidst the worsening pandemic, we kicked off the fall semester and launched the Ranger (our school mascot) Restart Plan. After the May 2020 Commencement, the Provost appointed six planning teams as part of the university's Ranger Restart Plan. The teams worked over the summer and were supported by a master's student who provided additional research assistance. They studied the latest information and best practices on how institutions were responding to the pandemic. The six teams, comprising a total of 69 faculty, staff, and students, focused on 1) In –person Instruction -- how to safely return to face-to-face classes; 2) Remote Instruction -- how to maintain the quality of online instruction; 3) Student Services, Activities, and Residence Life -- how to provide high quality student engagement while meeting pandemic protocols; 4) Research Continuity -- maintaining on-campus and remote research; 5) High Impact Practice Experiences -- maintenance of and return to participation in HIPs; and 6) Creative and Artistic Practice -- how to deliver our instruction and performances in the arts.

The campus reopened in late August, students moved back into the residence halls by appointment over the Labor Day weekend, faculty finalized their course syllabi for virtual and hybrid learning, staff

completed modifications to the campus environment, and everyone pledged to do their part in flattening the COVID-19 growth curve. Classrooms looked noticeably different with all chairs at least six feet apart and all students and faculty wearing face coverings. Faculty wore clear face shields making it easier for them to lecture and students to hear their words, monitor their expressions, and read their lips. Even though classrooms were thoroughly cleaned on a daily basis, classrooms were equipped with cleaning supplies to allow students and faculty to clean surfaces between class sessions. The campus required face coverings in all buildings, improved ventilation in campus spaces, increased cleaning regimens, and reduced public access to campus to help reduce the spread of the virus.

In partnership with the University of Wisconsin System, at the start of the fall term UW-Parkside introduced regular COVID-19 testing for residential students and congregant groups. University of Wisconsin System President, Tommy Thompson, secured federal and state support to expand testing for all students, faculty and staff, as well as the general public, to slow the quickening spread of the virus and as an outgrowth of the university's commitment to the Wisconsin Idea. In fall 2020, UW-Parkside administered over 3,500 antigen tests to residential students with a 1.40% positivity rate. This positivity rate was significantly lower than those reported by regional public health authorities during the fall and indicated that the testing protocols coupled with contact tracing, isolation, and quarantining practices helped control the spread of COVID-19 on campus.

Summary

COVID-19 disproportionately affects those with less. Lower income families are less likely to have jobs that can be performed remotely increasing their chances of exposure to the virus. They are less likely to have access to sick days or health insurance, or to make enough money to have a financial cushion to absorb unforeseen health costs. Lower income parents are more challenged to afford childcare to ensure the safety of children forced to stay at home and learn remotely because their schools are closed. Many children without access to free-and-reduced cost meals because their schools are closed are threatened by inadequate nutrition. The pandemic, while not causing these issues, exacerbates the challenges faced by the poor.

A bit under half of UW-Parkside students are classified as Pell-eligible, a proxy for "low income". The above challenges, heightened by structural racism and COVID-19, dictated that our efforts during 2020 and beyond continue to be focused on better supporting our students and continuing to attract and graduate more of them. The education we provide has never been more valuable and the students we serve have never needed us as much and that's why we're sticking to our plan.

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Racial Trauma Intervention Informing Campus Police Relations

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In the wake of nationwide protests over racialized violence and policing, colleges and universities must find productive means to acknowledge students' feelings of disconnect and fear, particularly those of students of color, that are frequently rooted in mistrust and grounded in the histories that they may bring from their communities of origin. During the Spring and Summer of 2020, William Paterson University explored institutional transformative strategies in response to national dialogues around racial injustice and police relations. This work was informed by a survey of student levels of racialized trauma during the protests following the killing of George Floyd and the handling of Breonna Taylor's shooting death. Responses to this survey were used to develop a proactive series of initiatives designed to assure a safe and inclusive space for students' return to campus in Fall 2020. These initiatives model a comprehensive institutional framework for implementing sustained partnerships with University Police and specific strategies to pivot programs during times of crisis to address the concerns and experiences of racial trauma among students, with a particular focus on students of color.

Long before the series of police killings targeting Black bodies and the racial violence that roiled the nation in 2020 triggered wide-ranging social protests, colleges and universities had been facing increasing questions about the role of campus police and the history of racialized conflicts within campuses (Anderson, 2015). William Paterson University, a regional comprehensive institution located in the greater New York Metropolitan area, was no different. Despite its long-stated commitment to diversity, a strong percentage of students from racially diverse backgrounds, and its 2015 federal designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution, William Paterson University faced increasing racial and cultural tensions as a suburban campus serving adjoining urban centers. In Spring 2018, two separate hate speech incidents linked to the campus generated institutional dialogues on diversity and policing, particularly in the national context of growing White supremacy discourse and increasing rates of police racial violence against communities of color. In a well-attended campus forum that May, which one attendee recorded and circulated on social media, students of color expressed to the administration their feelings of fear in the face of what they saw as targeted reactions by University Police. Fueled by these heightened levels of student activism and under the leadership of a new university president, the campus moved in 2018-2019 through a series of student-driven town halls and articulation of student demands. A key outcome of these dialogues was the launching in Fall 2019 of the University's Center for Diversity & Inclusion and, under its auspices, a Black Cultural Center. The creation of these units laid important groundwork for a timely campus response not only to support COVID-19 pandemic coping by racialized students, but also to address the trauma prompted by the simultaneous overlay of the increasing racial injustice and police violence in Summer 2020.

In this paper, we first introduce how the campus made use of the concept of race-based traumatic stress (Nadal, et al., 2019) and an understanding of the factors and forces that undergird it. From there,

we share the concept of restorative justice as used by the University's Center for Diversity & Inclusion (CDI) and link it to a model of student belonging adopted by the University. Informed by that collective context, we then present key findings from a Racial Trauma and Social Media Survey deployed to selected students at the University in June 2020 and describe how these findings informed valuable dialogue with University Police and specific positive action steps that ensued. The paper closes with a set of actionable implications for college administrators and campus police leadership.

Conceptual Frameworks

Race-Based Traumatic Stress

It is critical for higher education administrators and faculty to identify and develop effective and meaningful tools and strategies to better understand racial trauma. A university agenda that promotes an equity and inclusion agenda and fills gaps in the experiences of Black and Brown students on today's campuses with more affirming, validating, and inclusive college experiences supports their long-term success. University work in this area also helps those in support roles and positions of influence and positional power to develop a deeper understanding of the role racial stressors play in contributing to trauma.

Research on race-based traumatic stress (RBTS) (Nadal et al., 2019) provides a valuable means of understanding the context for student response to prolonged racial trauma. Mental Health America (MHA) is a nationally recognized community-based nonprofit organization which focuses on working with individuals who live with and suffer from mental illness. MHA also works to improve structures to affirm mental health more positively. Referencing Helms et al. (2010) definition of racial trauma or RBTS, MHA defined RBTS as the mental and emotional impact of racist acts and behaviors such as racial bias and racial microaggressions. MHA grounds its work in an understanding that racism impacts the mental health of individuals and communities, particularly those from historically or presently underrepresented backgrounds. This organization actively engages in identifying, confronting, and dismantling racism of all forms. Carter et al. (2013) further explained that experiencing racial bias, racial microaggressions, ethnic discrimination, racism and hate crimes leads to emotional and psychological pain, and Black and Indigenous People of Color are the most vulnerable populations to have RBTS because of systemic racism and white supremacy.

The long- and short-term impact of these types of experiences can have damaging psychological impacts on individuals and their broader communities. When an individual is identified to have RBTS, Carter et al. (2017) noted symptoms such as depression, anger, recurring thoughts of the event, physical reactions (e.g., headaches, chest pains, insomnia), hypervigilance, low-self-esteem, and mentally distancing from the traumatic events that may appear and reappear for short or extended periods. The literature also makes clear that RBTS is not a diagnosed mental health disorder, but rather a mental injury due to living within a system that reinforces and perpetuates racism and where experiencing events of racism is frequent (Carter et al., 2017).

While there is minimal research on evidence-based practices on how to work with individuals who are victims of racial trauma, the research that has been done discusses how the pain of people of color who have suffered from racial trauma often impacts multiple generations (Williams et al., 2018). The ways in which racialized trauma impacts multiple generations can be identified as primary trauma, secondary trauma, or vicarious trauma (Williams et al., 2018). Primary trauma refers to the initial traumatic experience. Secondary trauma results from the stress of working with or intimately knowing somebody who has been traumatized or is suffering. Vicarious trauma occurs because of exposure to graphic and/or traumatic material such as videos of other people facing racism, police brutality, or intergenerational systemic and historic oppression. These emotions are associated with trauma that can

endure for years, which speaks directly to the multigenerational impact of witnessing these horrific acts of racial violence.

Williams et al. (2018) suggested that repeatedly experiencing racism in a circumstance where the pattern becomes increasingly negative and traumatizing can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While not all racial trauma leads to PTSD, for a subset of people with heightened vulnerabilities, PTSD is a possibility. Figure 1 below illustrates how the trauma can be compounded.

Figure 1. *Model of How Racial Trauma Compounds (Williams et al., 2018)*
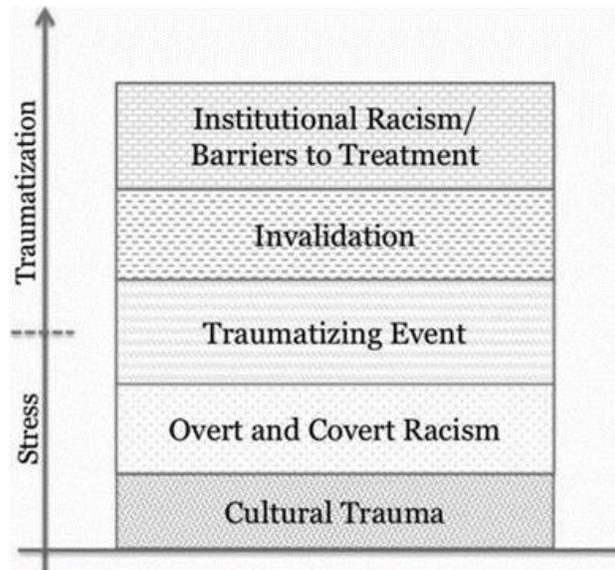
When viewed through this lens, Polanco-Roman et al. (2016) suggested that psychological trauma is an outcome for racial minorities when encountering racial discrimination, particularly for Black-identified individuals. Much of what racial minorities face is well documented, especially in the age of social media and online technology. Recurring videos of police brutality and other forms of racial violence can be trauma-inducing for viewers and illicit fear, pain, and hopelessness. It is important for people who do not experience or witness these episodes of racial violence targeted to their racial/ethnic group to be aware, empathetic, and supportive. Specifically, racial violence by law enforcement may yield emotional and psychological impacts that negatively damage mental health and heighten stress levels in individuals. The repeated pattern of these moments is harmful to how individuals understand their everyday lived experience and how they define their sense of belonging to a community such as a college or university.

Restorative Justice

Broadly defined, restorative justice is both a theory and a practice. Braithwaite (2004) suggested that restorative justice is,

> a process where all stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and to decide what should be

done to repair the harm. With crime, restorative justice is about the idea that because crime hurts, justice should heal. It follows that conversations with those who have been hurt and with those who have inflicted the harm must be central to the process. (p. 29)

At its root, restorative justice is based on the premise that those most affected by an event, decision, or actions of another should have opportunities to collectively discuss and define its impact (Zehr, 2015). Restorative justice practices preserve or transfer decision-making power and authority back to those most affected by an event or decision. They encourage direct dialogue in order to 1) collectively identify how an event, decision, or individual action(s) has affected others, 2) support accountability and responsibility, and 3) work to address or redress the self-defined needs of participants that have arisen as a result of the event (Zehr, 2015). Restorative justice is intrinsically linked to inclusion work, and more importantly, to conflict resolution, which is at the core of achieving a positive campus climate. Institutions miss this point if they frame priorities for diversity and inclusion with a focus on increasing diverse student demographics without providing the infrastructure to support the needs of these diverse students in acclimating to a particular context such as higher education or to address the bias-related challenges these students face due to their identities.

Student Belonging

Extensive research has evidenced the criticality of belongingness as a fundamental human need affirming a person's desire to feel part of a larger group (Allen, 2020; Maslow, 1968). Informed by this scholarship, the Center for Diversity & Inclusion (CDI) at William Paterson University developed the framework below (Figure 2), which illustrates three critical factors that support a positive sense of belonging, namely institutional values, promises, and perceptions. This framework was developed in recognition of the fact that no matter what a community like a university might espouse in a mission statement, if a student perceives that that they are not welcomed, feels racially profiled, or experiences excessive police force, a sense of belonging that is crucial to retention and student success will be compromised.

Figure 2. *Model of Student Belonging*
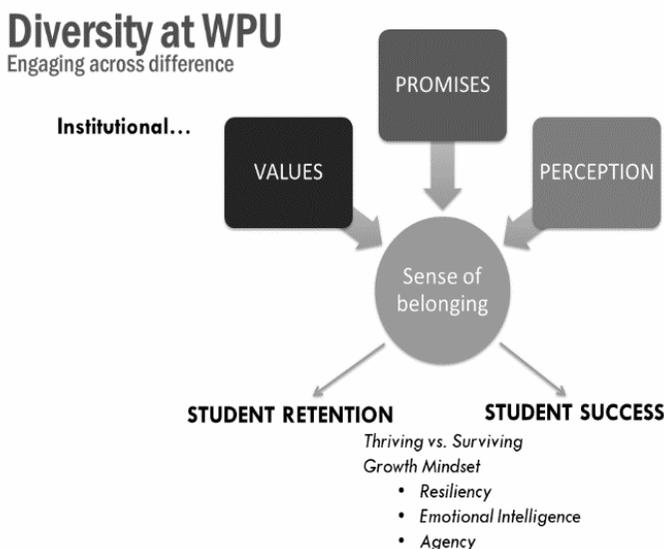
When William Paterson University opened the CDI in Fall 2019, the CDI's mission to create a climate of justice, equity and inclusion focused on three strategic efforts to enhance student belongingness:

1) To establish new relationships across the university centered on accountability.
2) To produce a new initiative with the Counseling Health & Wellness Center titled the "The Bridge Student Support Group" designed to provide a confidential space for students to process their experience with trauma, microaggressions, and systemic barriers.
3) In collaboration with the student representative to the Board of Trustees, to strengthen the rapport between students and University Police by establishing shared goals: create transformative change by elevating student concerns through open dialogue; demonstrate transparency between University Police and the student body; expand collaborative initiatives with Community Policing; and increase awareness of Community Policing services.

This work utilized a three-pronged approach of *knowledge*, *action*, and *resources* to raise awareness of the gaps in services and resources for historically marginalized students; to examine student experiences with University Police; and to produce a shared vision across stakeholders of new priorities for the CDI. The *knowledge* component focused on raising awareness and consciousness of realities and issues that had been muted or erased. The *action* element sought to develop and foster relationships across the university, centering accountability as a measure of success. In terms of *resources*, the work emphasized the creation of new culturally responsive programs and initiatives. Each of these goals, grounded in a restorative justice model, support university strategic priorities related to student retention and success, a positive campus climate, and inclusive practices.

Results

Racial Trauma and Social Media Survey

These important first steps positioned the CDI well to respond effectively during the escalating crises of Spring and Summer 2020 as the University worked to assess the needs of a very diverse student body operating remotely through the pandemic and adversely impacted by the racialized traumas of police violence. In June 2020, the CDI deployed a Racial Trauma and *Social Media Survey* to assess the impact of police violence during the COVID-19 pandemic on an engaged sample of students. An email was sent to these students with the subject line: "Survey on Racial Trauma and Social Media" inviting their reflection on managing racial trauma in light of the latest acts of police brutality dominating the news and social media and to solicit their recommendations for action at the University. It also invited them to participate in a follow-up virtual group discussion.

The survey tool consisted of 18 Likert scale and open-ended questions. Thematically, the items provided insights into how students identified, class years, and hometown contexts as well offering a set of questions focused on what the respondents had seen on social media or television related to the George Floyd killing or other victims, frequency of viewing of these images, and how they were feeling as a result. The survey also inquired about what they may have personally witnessed or experienced with regards to the police on or off campus, their coping mechanisms for racial trauma, and any mental health self-care and campus resources they had sought. Finally, the survey invited recommendations for change in students' hometown community as well as at the University.

From among the 400 students surveyed from a cross-section of diverse student organizations, residence life advisors, and peer health educators, 63 completed surveys were received, primarily from undergraduates in their sophomore, junior, and senior years. Of those who responded, 52% identified

as Black/African American, 23% as White, 10% as Multiracial, 6% as Afro-Latino/Latina/o/x, 2% as Asian; 2% as South Asian, and 5% as Other. With regard to their hometowns, 47% identified their residence as located in northern New Jersey (the region surrounding the campus), 34% from Central New Jersey, 12% from southern New Jersey, and 4% from New York State.

Among the key findings were the following:

- 40% of respondents had negative interactions with law enforcement in their own communities;
- 24% of respondents expressed that they had experienced a negative interaction at William Paterson University related to racial profiling by University Police;
- Of these 24% of participants who had a negative interaction with University Police, 69% identified as Black.

These data thus highlighted significant indicators of mistrust of University Police, particularly among students identifying as Black. An analysis of qualitative comments also revealed substantial student hypersensitivity about feeling racially profiled on and off-campus and general mistrust and fear of law enforcement.

With regards to recommendations, the following thematic comment areas are representative:

- A desire for University Police to engage in more training that addressed inconsistency in interactions with students and projected messages of intimidation, unfriendliness, and harassment.
- A desire for more open dialogue between students and University Police and for more information on student resources and rights when interacting with law enforcement.
- A desire for the University to examine how the University Police is integrated into student leisure spaces such as at cultural events, with respondents sharing that police presence leads to student feelings of being unsafe; Black students in particular noted feelings of being over-policed.
- A desire for the University to rethink the role of University Police in residence halls. Specifically, students stated that University Police should not be allowed to make mental health checks on students and that University Police should be kept out of the residence halls as much as possible.

The survey also revealed powerful insights on the impact that viewing police violence on social media had on racial trauma, or RBTS. A summary of the frequency with which students watched content related to the killing of George Floyd is found in Table 1.

As can be seen, the frequency with which the different demographics of students watched videos of George Floyd's killing varied, but a disproportionate percentage of students of color indicated that what they had seen greatly impacted them. When asked to describe the impact of watching the videos on social media, students expressed fear that an altercation with the police would lead to death due to the color of their skin and stated that they experienced fear daily for the safety of family members when they left the home. The emotional impact of watching these incidents expressed by participants in the survey included anger, disgust, a feeling of being fed up or of being horrified yet numb. Students described feeling physically sick and unable to breathe or pained to the point of tears. Students also discussed experiences of familial conflict due to educational differences or ignorance regarding the Black Lives Matter movement. They shared that they felt compelled to attend protests, despite fears

Table 1. *Frequency of Social Media and Television News Watching of Killing of George Floyd*

Frequency of Social Media and Television News Watching of Killing of George Floyd					
	Purposefully have not viewed the full video but see posts on social media	Viewed video repeatedly daily	Viewed more than 5 times	Viewed 1 and 5 times	Total
Asian			1		1
Greatly Impacted			1		1
Black, African-American	3	5	12	13	33
Greatly Impacted	3	3	11	10	27
No Impact			1	1	2
Somewhat Impacted		2		2	4
Latino/a/x	1	2	1		4
Greatly Impacted	1	2	1		4
Multiracial	1	1		5	7
Greatly Impacted	1	1		5	7
Other/Choose not to Disclose		1	1	1	3
Greatly Impacted		1		1	2
Somewhat Impacted			1		1
South Asian	1				1
Somewhat Impacted	1				1
White, Cauasian	2	2	3	7	14
Greatly Impacted	1	2	1	3	7
Somewhat Impacted	1		2	4	7
Grand Total	8	11	18	16	63

around the pandemic, and a desire to figure out how to make a difference and to be part of the solution. Students also expressed confusion and uncertainty about what to believe in the media and the need to disconnect from social media for extended periods of time.

When asked to identify from a list of seven feelings they may have experienced in reaction to what they had seen on social media or television, they noted the following (in rank order): Anger (100%); Sadness (95%); Desensitization (92%); Fear (88%); Hopelessness (79%); Numbness (74%); and, Indifference (12%). When asked to identify outcomes from a list of seven that they felt were linked to what they had seen on social media or television, most students indicated a range of symptoms, including experiences of the following in rank order frequency (with only 14 indicating none of these):

- Anxiety (59%)
- Irritability (48%)
- Uncontrollable thoughts about the event (38%)
- Depression (34%)
- Poor concentration (20%)
- Flashbacks (7.8%)
- Nightmares (6.3%)

These indications of racial trauma, especially impacting members of the Black community, underscore why it is important for faculty and staff in higher education, and particularly for campus police officers, to be aware of the persistence of this experience on students. Racial trauma can be

unconsciously and sometimes consciously reinforced in campus interactions. Awareness of the significant disproportionate and recurring impact of intergenerational trauma and of the ways in which long-standing systemic racism, racial microaggressions and cumulative racial trauma play a role in the university experience of Black and Brown college students is crucial for creating a community that supports belonging and inclusion. At William Paterson University, these indicators from the survey presented a compelling narrative of mistrust and racial trauma and served to provide some key motivation for campus units to address means to bolster positive relations with University Police and support a sense of belonging in advance of the return in Fall 2020 of students seeking a place of support and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Action Efforts with University Police

Following this survey, the CDI worked with the Chief Diversity Officer to spearhead dialogues with University Police regarding data findings from the survey, discussion of national trends, and the University Police's position on Freedom of Expression and their role in supporting students at the start of the coming academic year. The three units worked together to facilitate a *University Police and Student Perspective Listening Session* that brought together representatives from University Police, including the director, a detective, and several sergeants, with 24 student leaders representing multicultural organizations, Residence Life, Peer Health Advocates, and Student Patrol Leaders. The purpose of this discussion was to get a sense of the student experience and sentiments about the reputation, relationship, and perceptions regarding University Police, as well as to discuss student solutions and recommendations advanced in the survey. The CDI followed up on this session with a series of meetings with the University Police. As a result of these dialogues, University Police leaders expressed a commitment to demonstrate increased transparency between University Police and the student body and to expand collaborative initiatives.

In Fall 2020, as evidence of this commitment, University Police representatives served on a new Freedom of Expression Policy Committee convened by the Chief Diversity Officer to review the existing policy regarding student demonstrations. The revised Freedom of Expression policy formalized the University Police's role in responding to demonstrations and outlined resources for students. University Police also invited the Chief Diversity Officer to engage in a sergeant hiring process, resulting in the promotion of two candidates from diverse backgrounds. University Police reached out to the CDI for student nominations and recommendations for Student Patrol positions on campus and for assistance in developing promotional strategies for their annual Law Enforcement Torch Run, a fundraiser benefiting the Special Olympics. With particularly important symbolic impact, University Police changed established foot-patrol patterns to include walking through the CDI to engage with students in non-crisis settings. Furthermore, University Police continues to engage with the CDI to schedule listening sessions with students once a semester. The University also launched the following programs to sustain and improve University Police relations among students, working toward a more racially-just environment:

- The CDI implemented a university model for a student Courageous Conversation intergroup dialogue adopted by Residence Life and the Counseling, Health, & Wellness Center, which collectively offers three intergroup student dialogue workshops per month to discuss such issues as: making meaning of racial injustice in our communities; centering mental health and well-being in our communities; colorism in 2020; and discussion of peaceful protests vs riots.
- The Chief Diversity Officer facilitates a monthly Community Dialogue Series for faculty and staff on topics such as unconscious bias and allyship.

- The CDI incorporated new programs for a student Social Justice Leadership Badge that featured social justice activists speaking on strategies related to healing and reconciliation and strategies to build bridges with law enforcement.
- The CDI is working with University Police to develop and incorporate workshops as part of CDI's *Know Your Rights* series.

Implications for Future Practice

As campuses work to foster supportive student experiences with policing units, it is important for members of the police, administration, faculty, and staff to be aware of the ways in which racial trauma persistently impacts people of color, especially members of the Black community. This racial trauma can be unconsciously and sometimes consciously reinforced within the college or university environment. Understanding what perpetuates intergenerational trauma and the ways in which long-standing systemic racism, racial microaggressions, and cumulative experience play a role in the university experience of Black and Brown college students is critical for advancing effective relationships.

Informed by the experience at William Paterson University both before and during the pandemic, we suggest that fostering a positive environment for effective student – campus police relationships can be achieved, and that outcomes from this process can serve as a foundation for the reduction of racial trauma. The data obtained from our survey, and the actions taken as a result, suggest how institutions can thoughtfully and inclusively address policies and practices that may uphold systemic racism or perpetuate mistrust. Our data suggest that efforts to tackle mistrust must go well beyond addressing students' relationship with campus police, however; mistrust on college campuses is an amalgamation of behaviors and attitudes that stem from antiquated policies and practices that perpetuate racism and microaggression by people at all levels – in the classroom, across divisions, on-campus and in the external community.

As higher education administrators, we need to cultivate accountability within units that support students' ability to thrive – not just survive. Mistrust is formed when administrators turn a blind eye to the ways that systemic racism is embedded in higher education and can play out in everyday interactions among people. Administrators too often rely on data without committing to actionable strategies that capture student grievances and make students feel protected. An unintended result can be a culture wherein current students indoctrinate new students to be wary of university administrators and campus police. Signals of an inequitable campus culture include students posting messages anonymously on public message boards or students sharing experiences with trusted faculty and staff who do not know how to report such issues. Mistrust is further exacerbated when students who do speak openly about their experiences or call out inconsistent practices of administrators are labeled as problematic, instead of as champions, advocates, or whistleblowers. As shown in Figure 3, effective measures and systemic structures of accountability are key in fostering the values of inclusion.

College administrators can begin the process of accountability with campus police by framing the following questions when redefining this relationship:
1) What is at stake?
2) What is our common goal?
3) Who are we as people (our intent, our experience, our personal motivation)?

From an administrative viewpoint, it is also important to examine factors over time that might have led to given moments of crisis. What, for example, were historical displacements of resources that could have contributed toward current campus climate issues or fostered mistrust with campus police? While continuing a long tradition of serving many first-generation students in northern New Jersey, for

example, William Paterson University moved from being a predominantly white institution to one with roughly 60% racially diverse students due to changing regional demographics, with perhaps insufficient focus on this change across the community and within its structures.

Figure 3. *Inclusive Model for Establishing Student Belonging Through Accountability*

While it had historically been at the forefront of fostering diversity and multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, the University had eliminated its Office of Minority Affairs in 2000, which left a symbolic gap in the campus administrative structure. An additional systemic issue has been that, though the University has had a long-standing means of receiving general student grievances, it remains without one for the tracking of bias-related incidents specifically. Furthermore, the rates of Black and Brown students written up for conduct violations continues to be disproportionately higher than for their White peers. On a representational level, after a strong period of growth in hiring of African-American and Asian faculty members and administrators in the 1990s, such growth slowed and remains behind what it needs to be to reflect proportionality that of the student body, particularly in relation to the University's Latinx and African-American students. Of particular relevance to this paper, leadership diversity within the University Police sergeant and detective ranks remains low, necessitating focused efforts to overcome historical regional hiring trends in these positions.

While it is the responsibility of University Police to align unit practices with the university mission, it is also the responsibility of key campus stakeholders to invest in the success of University Police and to support their ability to maintain a safe and affirming environment on campus, to coordinate emergency response strategies, and to respond to hate crimes and other forms of violence. Placing value in people that serve as front line officers and using a restorative justice model to build trust with University Police fosters a greater emphasis on accountability as a measure of success. William Paterson University began a process of building trust with University Police through the following means: 1) developing shared goals; 2) building cross-divisional relationships and committing to the work ahead together through collaborative partnerships; 3) establishing collaborative programs that

incorporate shared goals and demonstrate a unified front; and 4) maintaining lines of communication and scheduling regular cross-unit meetings.

In dialogues with University Police officers, it became clear that they held a strong desire to connect with the community and to form meaningful relationships with stakeholders and students. Officers expressed an understanding that their presence could create a negative impact if they were to come across an unavoidable issue during their community outreach efforts such as evidence of possession of illicit drugs or behavior that violates university policy. University Police expressed jointly-envisioned solutions that would be helpful for them including the following, ones that could be broadly applied at many institutions of higher education:

1) Schedule specific targeted events in common spaces that are well advertised and structured to allow officers to engage with residents and students in a controlled environment and to demonstrate team and collaborative spirit.
2) Engage campus police in community resource presentations for resident advisor training, during orientation, and in First Year Experience programs.
3) Explore topics that campus police can facilitate as part of "Know Your Rights" programs and campaigns. Campus police see value in educating students on shared awareness of rules and protocols, in creating more understanding of how campus police enforce university policies, and in explaining the differences between university policies and state, local, or federal laws.
4) Assess student perceptions of campus police using survey tools and conduct ongoing listening sessions with campus police units to identify issues and solutions.
5) Examine and revise university policies, ensuring that any negative assumptions are removed, and that the role of campus police is made clear.
6) Examine student conduct trends and assess how first responders are trained, including clear guidelines for why and when staff/faculty/student staff should call campus police.

What has become clear through the conscious dialogues of this process is that both University Police and key stakeholders, such as other support units and student groups, demonstrate a willingness to invest in each other's mission, goals, and priorities. Specifically, the University Police and CDI have worked collaboratively by investing time in supporting events of the other unit, in participating in joint committee efforts, and in working together to alleviate pressures each may face under a common goal. This shared commitment can only function, however, if all parties acknowledge power dynamics when forming partnerships.

Conclusion

Campus policing is a more than 100-year old phenomenon, which has evolved from an early property protection role to a far more complex set of expectations. Contemporary campus policing units provide varied support for security-guard and rule enforcement duties, as well as responding to incidents of campus unrest in an increasingly professionalized approach that frequently resembles external policing (Sloan, 2020). Given this evolving history, it is not surprising that structures and communication systems need to be reviewed and evaluated periodically in light of changing institutional and cultural contexts. In this paper, we provided context for a student experience of racial trauma that was catalyzed most vividly during the pandemic by the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, but which follows a long and well-documented history of how policing behavior can impact minoritized communities. Through the framework of our campus efforts during the pandemic and within the integrated model provided, we offered a means of operationalizing campus action through

responsibility, respect, and relationship established with mutual trust. The foundation of this approach rests on the power of empathy, deployed through active listening to understand and validate the experience of another through their lens, followed by a willingness to consider alternative approaches to issue resolution. This can be challenging for a policing culture and system as it has been substantially embedded in the United States due to a perception and longstanding history of how power should be exercised for its three primary functions in society, namely crime control, order maintenance, and service. The commendable willingness of University Police and the emotional labor by campus administrators and stakeholders, particularly campus administrators and stakeholders of color, to engage in this process on our campus reflect a commitment to the shared goals of accountability, inclusion, and dialogue. A restorative justice approach linked to identifying common goals and motivations can do much to address race-based trauma, increase a sense of student belonging, and ultimately benefit student retention and success efforts.

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Reflections on Supporting Incoming Graduate Students of Color During a Double Pandemic

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Research on incoming graduate students signal that first-year graduate education is crucial to determining their success. Forty to seventy percent of all doctoral students leave their program, and up to 40% of those exits during their first year in graduate education (Gardner, 2009). As with many graduate programs across the United States, graduate student populations tend to be small. A student of color may be one of a few within their academic program (Tapia & Johnson, 2009). Research on the socialization of doctoral students highlight the need to expose graduate students to support services on campus including the role of institutional support, financial considerations, the culture and structure of academia, and creating communities of practice for doctoral support and success (Greene, 2015; Lahenius, 2012). Some research indicates that faculty advising (both positive and negative), laboratory rotation experiences, self-efficacy components, and changing professional goals all play a role in the early doctoral program attrition process (Maher, Wofford, Roska, & Feldon, 2020). Others argue that understanding the racial experience and the ways students interact with various processes during the doctoral experience can inform faculty, administrators, and doctoral students how to develop strategies and programs of support (Felder, Stevonson, & Gasman, 2014). Other researchers are looking for ways to understand how structural racism in STEM is needed to expose the marginalization of underrepresented groups in STEM and to improve understanding of the STEM policies, practices, and procedures that allow the foundation of racism to remain intact (McGee, 2019). In fact, some research suggests that institutionalized racism, sexism, and classism in the doctoral training process play a significant role in Chicano/Latino(a) doctoral socialization and professional career preparation experiences (Ramirez, 2016).

Supporting graduate students of color is crucial to changing the number of students who leave their doctoral programs. The Summer Doctoral Transition Initiative (SDTI) at Mid-West State University (MSU) is a summer orientation program that provides a nine-week orientation to graduate school life. SDTI seeks to address many of the transition challenges faced by doctoral students of color at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (Congleton, 2017). Due to the threat of COVID-19, MSU transitioned all of its academic programming to remote learning and paused all in-person programming, including summer research opportunities. The shift to remote programming presented the staff of SDTI with the challenges of supporting incoming graduate students during the compounded rise of two pandemics: COVID-19 and racism. The ongoing foci of undergraduate students over graduate students at the university level further exacerbated the challenges because of the assumption that graduate students experience higher education as undergraduates and should understand how to navigate institutional bureaucracies (Pontius & Harper, 2006, pg. 48). However, this is not necessarily the case for students of color, as they experience racism and minimal support when navigating the ivory tower.

In this reflective essay, the SDTI program coordinators share challenges and successes in transitioning a supportive community to online/ remote delivery. Taking the approach of what Sarah

Ahmed calls "feminist killjoys"--those who convene, assemble, or meet up not over happiness, but share hard truth of specific experiences (Ahmed, 2006). These uncomfortable truths expose the institutional realities of those working toward equity and inclusion in the context of supporting Black and Latina/o/x graduate students of color that need improvement. We first share our positionality as Women of Color committed to supporting and transforming the experiences of other graduate students of color who attend MSU for their graduate education. Alishia Alexander is an African American doctoral student who began her studies at MSU in 2016 as an SDTI participant for the sociology department. Throughout her graduate program, she maintained involvement with the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) office as both a Group Leader for SDTI in 2019 and Coordinator the following summer. Alishia's experiences with her department provided her the necessary insight and ability to guide incoming graduate students of color through the rigors of attending a PWI. Her perseverance through shifts in department leadership during a university-wide graduate student strike, her long-term advisor leaving, racial microaggressions from faculty members, and struggles with intersecting roles are a few examples that lent to Alishia's foresight to help run SDTI. Furthermore, her past employment with various higher education institutions in the Midwest while earning a master's degree in journalism revealed unique obstacles as a person of color that have remained with Alishia during her tenure at MSU. Gabriela E. Vargas is an Academic Professional working in the DEI unit of MSU graduate college and is simultaneously completing her doctoral degree in Mathematics Education. Gabriela navigated her doctoral program as a first-generation Latina whose parents migrated to California from Guatemala and Mexico and was the first in her family to pursue a doctoral degree. Through her doctoral student journey, Gabriela depended on the DEI office's support to help her navigate the challenges of navigating graduate school with a chronic illness. She joined the DEI unit staff in 2019 after realizing that her career aspirations centered on supporting the recruitment and retention of graduate students of color who attend predominantly white institutions. The authors' intersectional identities expose the various narratives that challenge a singular experience of graduate education.

We begin the essay by reflecting on the challenges and successes of transitioning SDTI to a remote learning experience during the program's planning, during the implementation of the experience for doctoral students, and during the fall semester. Some of the challenges addressed include creating a supportive environment for participants within their roles as students, parents, caretakers, spouses while living across multiple time zones; redressing inequities and access to quality internet and technology; providing mental and emotional support to the racialized experiences students faced within their incoming programs. We end the essay by highlighting key lessons that University Administrators should consider when supporting incoming graduate students of color. These lessons include the importance of adequate funding for participants, early adaptation to remote learning environments, and creating space for students of color to demonstrate their research to build community.

Context of the Summer Doctoral Transition Initiative

For over 20 years, SDTI has provided incoming doctoral students with the opportunity to transition to the university early and build a community with other doctoral students of color and their departments. The implementation of the program was geared toward responding to attrition rates of students in Ph.D. programs. Over the past 20 years, SDTI has mentored over 600 students into the first year of their doctoral program to help them build community with one another. Overall, the program provided an orientation to the department and the university. The program itself helped participants become socialized into the departmental culture and afford them an advanced opportunity to become familiar with their graduate program's rigors living in the Midwest Campus Town.

Given its 20 years of existence, SDTI programming has taken many different approaches to fit best the needs of the students who are beginning their graduate education at MSU. The most recent iteration of the SDTI program focused on providing participants with an early introduction to graduate study and an opportunity to work with a summer research advisor or a faculty mentor in their department. Traditionally, the program runs over a nine-week summer session. Each participant enrolls in an independent study course directed by their advisor or faculty mentor and fulfills a rotation (for students in the sciences and engineering). Students participating in SDTI also attend a series of seminars on sustainable work-life practices, maximizing productivity, and the importance of identifying one's "essential intent" (McKeown, 2014)." SDTI focused on these goals to help participants navigate their first-year graduate experience by sharing how to set inspirational yet concrete plans to help students navigate higher education's hidden curriculum (Ramirez, 2014).

Structurally, The SDTI presents a counter-narrative (Gonzalez, 2019) to the typical graduate student experiences. SDTI centers graduate students' experiences with intersectional identities by incorporating intergenerational narratives that provide insight into their graduate student experience. Our students identify as racial/ ethnically diverse. They are usually the first in their family to pursue graduate education, raise children during their time in graduate school, and care for other family members. Moreover, the program coordinators recognize the expertise that peer mentors provide incoming graduate students as older graduate students. Hiring seasoned graduate students who are 3-4 years into their graduate program allows incoming students to receive information about the different campus departments' relevant experiences and knowledge. The intergenerational learning facilitates SDTI participants to hear from various university representatives, including administrators and staff, community members, and other students. It allows students to make an informed decision of how they engage in their graduate programs. Hearing from current university staff and advanced graduate students provides incoming graduate students with a network of peers and mentors to reach out to as they navigate their doctoral programs. Advance graduate students mentor undergraduate students through a research writing course and share their experiences during the sustainability mentoring classes.

SDTI served 40 incoming students during the 2019 summer, which was the largest cohort to date. Inspired by the program's impact on incoming students and the program's support across various departments, SDTI received tremendous support from upper administration, including the provost, to increase our reach and recruit 50% more participants for summer 2020 with the financial backing of the provost. We had intentions of meeting those goals and received a total of 80 applications. SDTI invited 67 students to participate, and 62 accepted to participate in the program. Of those who participated in the program, 40 self-identified as female, 22 as male. The racial ethnic breakdown included 28 students who self-identified as Black/ African American and 35 as Latina/o/x. Thirty-four students were pursuing STEM-related doctoral programs, and 28 students were in Humanities and Social Science programs.

Shifting Gears Due to COVID-19 Restrictions

As COVID-19 became a larger problem across the United States, many universities scrambled as they transitioned the second half of the spring semester to remote delivery. Simultaneously, planning for the implementation of summer programs was in full effect, with applications filling our email boxes and students calling to ask if the program would continue for that summer. At MSU, program directors researched ways of providing the programming in a virtual and remote environment. With many parts up in the air, our programming team was frozen in time. The university focused on making plans for the end of the spring semester before making any recommendations for the summer. This brought many

challenges to our programming delivery. For weeks, we were under the impression that the programmers of SDTI had the same financial resources to support incoming students. Little did we know that we were about to face many more challenges for delivering a sustainable program, remotely, to the largest cohort of students.

As we began to receive more clarity of University policies and procedures around Summer programs, SDTI coordinators navigated the challenge of upper administration significantly reducing our summer programs' budget. Fearful of the imminent budget cuts and the memory of the 2008 budget crisis that impacted higher education, our leading administration was preparing for the pandemic's long-lasting impact, including a loss in revenue. To help in the effort, our Dean requested that we reduce our programming budget by 63%. What did not come down was the number of students we needed to support. With fewer funds to support our graduate students' transition to their graduate programs, we had to limit graduate students' opportunities. We had to cut the number of hours our graduate student staff to provide more funds for incoming students and limit the stipend amount that we could offer to students. We were also forced to reduce our summer stipend from $4000 plus room and board to $2500 total. Unfortunately, this went against our goal of providing a sustainable student experience where students focus on their transition rather than finding supplemental income.

We also collaborated with departments to find ways to replicate experiences typically provided to our program participants when engaging in an in-person program. To address our goal of helping develop community within their department, we ask that students have a designated mentor or set of labs that students will rotate during the summer. Unfortunately, with many wet labs closing as the university developed safety protocols for engaging responsibly in the research, many labs stopped meeting and halted their research projects. These circumstances meant that many of our students did not have the option to work in labs or learn new techniques and interact with lab mates who could share their experiences or learn about the department's culture and climate. Students in humanities and social sciences could not explore many of the academic resources at students' disposal, such as libraries, research software and other technologies. To address these limitations, we worked with departments to ensure that they had a concrete plan for engaging their students over the summer and an understanding of what we were expecting students to deliver at the end of the summer. At the same time, we noticed that many departments wanted their students funded and to be recognized as supportive towards underrepresented racial/ ethnic students at our university. However, they were less invested in addressing concerns that students raised with regards to historically minoritized students.

New leadership also disrupted standard practices. One of the main goals for developing our SDTI staff is to mentor and build leaders by allowing senior graduate students to participate in the summer participant recruitment process. This practice aligned with passing on intergenerational and institutional knowledge to provide professional development opportunities for future university administrators and faculty. Developing sustainable mentoring practices is an essential practice for our program. We rely on senior graduate students' expertise to facilitate and help SDTI participants build community with each other and the larger campus community. As part of the mentoring of graduate student staff, the Coordinator leads the selection of SPI participants. However, there was a push to change those practices and remove the Coordinator from the student selection process. The constant interruption and changes to existing practices added an ongoing pressure of losing time that allowed us to prepare for the summer sustainably. Not having ample time for thoughtful planning, we found ourselves scrambling into survival mode to ensure that we have the necessary curriculum and information to communicate with participants and academic departments.

Our ultimate goal was to ensure we could still provide essential components of our in-person program in a remote setting. Our programing included three weekly synchronous meetings with a sustainability seminar, weekly graduate student panels that addressed graduate school culture, and

weekly cohort meetings where students would check-in with their advanced graduate student mentor. Overall, we planned to our best ability to help students focus on the sustainable practices that they can use to confront the imposter syndrome feeling or their worthiness of being in a program and their ability to succeed.

Observations during program implementation

As the program began, various situations arose that demonstrated our participants' heterogeneous backgrounds and the interference it would have on their participation. The challenges were uniquely linked to our in-person program shifting to an online setting as we traditionally provide room and board, space away from other responsibilities, and early access to resources necessary for starting a new program. However, by running the program remotely, we were unable to eliminate the inequities of students' lives, and these were heightened as students participated in the seven-week program.

Like others across the U.S., students at our institution navigate many roles while participating in graduate programs. Some of these roles include student, parent, spouse, family member, caretaker, and a host of others. The impact of managing responsibilities that coincide with these different roles are significant and profound for students who are underrepresented racial minorities. Their reality exacerbated even further when the COVID-19 pandemic raged on during Summer 2020. Many students in our summer program tended to overlapping responsibilities that were uniquely tied to their various roles. Parents not only needed to attend weekly seminars and events but were also in charge of juggling childcare and e-learning. Their outside responsibilities impacted their ability to be fully present as a summer participant and parent to kids who needed looking after or help with schoolwork. As a result, these students would miss out on crucial information during seminars and community-building opportunities with peers and staff members because of their divided attention.

Students who were managing employee, familial and caregiver roles experienced limitations as well. Oftentimes this emerged when their schedules conflicted with competing appointments with advisors, lab groups, doctor visits, etc. Participants made decisions to either skip or reschedule prior commitments because they had to choose which was more important in that moment. These choices' consequences ranged from minor inconveniences to significant repercussions, especially for hard-to-schedule appointments or a work shift that could make or break a paycheck. Employment outside of the program usually wouldn't be allowed because of the support we provide students, but we made an exception for summer 2020 due to budget cuts. Thus, several students noted how challenging it was to make decisions as they were concerned with not appearing unorganized, unreliable, or lazy – a common theme amongst graduate students of color who fight against perpetuating misconstrued perceptions of people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Students' intersecting roles also impacted their abilities to create and maintain boundaries that honored their needs, values, goals, and feelings. Sacrificing alone time or quality time with family to get work done was typical for students who struggled to uphold their boundaries. Many students also encountered difficulties fulfilling personal needs because another role called them away to complete household duties no one else could do, tend to their children, or provide support to a sick family member with COVID-19. This juggling act resulted in challenges with sleep, especially for those who lived in different time zones and countries. Consequently, many sought out advice on how to manage their sleep schedule and other responsibilities.

Additionally, the lack of boundaries spilled over into students' workspaces. The stay-at-home orders across the nation confined them to their homes and challenged their ability to get work done as others were also sharing the same space. Parents were often required to position themselves in the home to work on assignments or attend events and oversee activities and safety for their children

simultaneously. This prevented them from separating areas in the home for specific purposes or activities, which helps people manage a work-life balance in their households. Also, students who shared a house with roommates or significant others experienced boundary issues in their workspaces. Constant interruptions or conflicting work schedules in close quarters caused tension amongst housemates, which sometimes resulted in disputes and missed opportunities because they were distracted. These challenges wouldn't usually be an issue for students, given that our program is designed to create an equitable setting for students to fully focus on their transition to graduate school in an in-person environment.

In addition to students learning how to navigate and transition to remote learning, students were also living through the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM). Daily protest marches, emergency response sirens, and out-of-season fireworks that lasted for hours in densely populated neighborhoods caused students to feel distressed. Because these incidences carried on for weeks during the summer, many students developed forms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and insomnia (Zitting et al., 2020). PTSD disproportionately impacts Black and Brown residents who live in urban neighborhoods because of the constant exposure to violence, homicide, police brutality, poverty, and so on (Gillikin et al., 2016). The effects are life-long and amplified during moments of civil unrest similar to the BLM marches in summer 2020. Environmental conditions also stemmed from natural disasters for students who resided on the West Coast of the U.S. and internationally. Hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes created an extraordinary amount of strife for those in our summer program as their safety was threatened and access to the internet became unreliable.

Moreover, issues with time management and productivity were frequent shortcomings among the participants. They specifically struggled with creating and sticking to a routine as many of them were fresh out of undergrad and unaccustomed to the workload in graduate school. The number of graduate-level readings, meetings, and complex research assignments tested their ability to perform. Students also labored with productivity challenges as they battled with imposter syndrome due to doubt in their intellectual abilities, self-worth, and sense of belonging. The invisible pressure put on themselves wasn't unexpected given that it is a prevalent experience amongst students of color; however, the pressure was amplified during heightened moments of the racial pandemic where police brutally attacked Black and Brown protesters. The internal and external messages of inadequacy took a toll on our students to the point where the facilitators curated safe spaces to support their immediate needs during seminars.

Mental health and emotional support for racialized experiences remained at the forefront of the seven-week program. The murder of George Floyd jolted everyone and motivated many departments across the university to circulate messages of solidarity to students of color. While some of the language was mediocre at best, others were earnest despite their reputation for being micro-aggressive towards racially underrepresented students and staff. This consequently caused unsettled feelings for our participants and staff members as they battled the constant fear of catching COVID-19. The facilitators strongly encouraged them to seek mental health support, albeit the difficulty of locating adequate counseling, knowing when or how to ask for help, and utilizing the services provided in their local area or via the university. We did our best to highlight the importance of taking care of one's mental health but the obstacles that the pandemics imposed limited individual successes.

As the participants worked to navigate the double pandemics, they were entangled with other impacts as a result. Some overworked themselves by saying 'yes' to too many things they couldn't manage, reading more materials than necessary, and struggling to find the appropriate balance between quality and quantity. This led to early burnout despite the program being designed to introduce the participants to their respective graduate programs moderately. Nevertheless, we had several students who were caught up in distractions by consuming too much social media, current event stories, and the

2020 presidential election coverage. These distractions caused them to misallocate time and, thus, submit intermediate work at the last minute. While we recognize these problem-areas were historically common contentions, everything was heightened during Summer 2020. We wish we could've done more for our students but because we were up against a remote setting, budget cuts, and other external factors, we couldn't do so.

Navigating Challenges into the Fall Semester

After the summer program ended, we observed several common issues amongst our students as the university implemented a hybrid course design for the fall semester. Majority of the graduate programs replaced traditional face-to-face instruction with web-based online learning, while others instituted a combination of the two formats. The change in program delivery ultimately situated our students in an e-learning environment on a full-time basis and up against similar issues from the summer but in an intensified manner as their departments required more. Because many of the participants remained dispersed across the country, they missed out on a lot of crucial experiences and opportunities.

For first-year graduate students, getting to know their department as a whole is the cornerstone for successfully navigating a new institution. The ins and outs of learning which faculty and staff members can assist with questions, support, and research, are typically students' top priority. This, however, was difficult to accomplish because the virtual setup limited their access to people in the department and the ease of casually walking by offices that leaned to a natural interaction. The shift to remote delivery also impacted particular social events, lecture talks, and brown bags as it was not the same experience virtually compared to in-person occasions. The pleasantries doted on new students couldn't be easily maneuvered due to Zoom's limitations and the ongoing challenge of managing different roles at home.

Additionally, the virtual setting impacted students' ability to build a community with older cohorts and peers. Learning which students were further along in the program was often a guessing game given that many of them were either taking advanced courses or done taking classes altogether. This consequently impeded their opportunity to receive mentorship, collaborate on journal articles, and learn hidden departmental bureaucracy that could help choose courses and good working faculty-student relationships. Furthermore, the online environment impacted service opportunities for new students. Department colleagues typically sent advertisements for organizations and committees to the masses via word of mouth or flyers throughout the department. However, this didn't translate well virtually as emails were the primary communication source for open leadership positions to students who were already bogged down with constant correspondence in their inboxes.

The lack of community building with racial and ethnic peers also resulted from students being mostly remote. Across campus, many cultural houses provide unique support to students of color. Still, because access to these spaces was limited, our program participants could not reap the benefits fully. They weren't able to fully connect with others from different departments; undergrads who sought mentorship; and events that provided a sense of belonging to students who were outnumbered by white peers in their respective departments. In addition to peers, students missed out on relational bonding with administration and staff members who shared similar racial and ethnic backgrounds and experiences at a PWI. Remote events could only foster these invaluable experiences to a certain extent via a Zoom meeting in which several students vocalized their discontentment with the limitations brought on by COVID-19.

Additionally, the struggle to continue community with the Summer 2020 cohort was prevalent throughout the fall semester. This challenge has been a longstanding contention for students who move into their departments because they become very engrossed in their work. Our program has attempted

to maintain a community by creating accountability groups, reading groups, and events during Grad Appreciation week. However, the number of students who partake is not always equivalent to those who participated in the summer program. We recognize the level of difficulty it takes to keep up relationships with people. Still, we encourage them to implement what was learned over the summer, such as sustainable practices, tracking productivity, sharing advice, and resources. This was our approach to students this time around and it appeared to work. Lastly, we also made sure to continue curating safe spaces similar to the summer and previous semesters. Students of color must have a place outside of their department to seek support, affirmations, and refuge.

Informal student feedback highlighted the need for such spaces. Students wanted to focus on working on classwork or research and not have to discuss how they were navigating the civil unrest we were witnessing across the U.S. Providing these spaces allowed students to develop work accountability groups and celebrate their accomplishments, such as submitting a manuscript for publication or resolving errors in their coding. By adjusting our programming to address students' needs, we end this essay by highlighting some lessons we learned from providing graduate students support as they transition into their graduate programs during a double pandemic.

Lessons from our experiences

As higher education accepts the lasting impacts of COVID-19 and the heightened representations of racism that graduate students may face, we leave the reader with lessons that we learned during our programming that we carry as we prepare for the next class of incoming graduate students.

Summer Program administrators need to prioritize sustainable experiences that are ethically responsible and center the humanity of graduate students. SDTI aims to provide incoming graduate students with resources and networks that allow them to meet their goals as graduate students. These goals must stay the same even as we begin to confront the long-lasting impacts of the COVID pandemic. Some of our successes included providing students with opportunities to present in a virtual setting. By sharing the projects that students focused on during the summer, our participants made connections to potential collaborations as they heard about research across different disciplines. Program leaders should also allow students to engage in graduate student activities like engaging in conversations about research to enable constructive feedback. These practices allow students to become comfortable talking about their research with people who are not directly in their field. Furthermore, these opportunities would allow students to learn how to engage as a virtual scholar and provide the necessary affirmations that they are ready to navigate their graduate program and engage with their faculty and department in a virtual setting.

Administrators who run summer programs must also challenge the narratives of cost-effective practices that prioritize a larger number of participants but only provide limited resources. In summer 2020, we prioritized the number of students and not providing the necessary financial support for participants. As conversions of budget cuts across higher education infiltrate the capacity to deliver various programs, administrators should prioritize sustainable experiences and fully financially support students who participate in summer programs. Our plans for Summer 2021 prioritize this need by not only providing students with an academic stipend but also a remote living stipend and financial support to offset some of the technological inequities. Although we will not be running an in-person program, we recognize the need to provide support for students to develop their game plan as they transition into their graduate program.

While we may support less students for summer 2021, we intend to help students who are historically marginalized at our institution. We recognize that there is no one way of navigating graduate education. Incoming graduate students need to see and hear from various representations of a

community that supports their graduate student success. Such models should include advice for non-traditional students, such as graduate students who are parents and those who are caregivers for family members. Program administrators can implement policies such as allowing cameras to be off during online synchronous meetings and encouraging participation via different communication modes. Additionally, reevaluations of departmental practices and policies that perpetuate systems of oppression often faced by students of color need to be addressed (McGee, 2020). Failing to acknowledge systemic racism and struggling to engage in culturally responsive communication (Gay, 2018) can no longer be tolerated. Departments need to make meaning of the lived experiences of students and faculty of color and use it to help them learn from, communicate and relate respectfully with people from other cultures. As many scholars have suggested, institutions need to invest in building bidirectional relationships with graduate students, faculty and administrators (Felder et al., 2014, Greene 2015; Ramirez, 2017).

Lastly, we recommend creating virtual spaces of accountability for students to attend in the fall and spring semesters. Such accountability spaces can provide the necessary structure for students to engage in their academic work. These spaces also allow administrators to hear about some of the challenges students encounter during their remote learning experiences. These organic and semi-structured spaces do not fully replace in-person interaction, but they allow students to engage with peers and community members invested in their success. While there are many unknowns of the pandemic's long-lasting implications, we are also cautious about suggesting that remote experiences can eliminate racial microaggressions that graduate students face in person. In fact, it is essential to take note of the ways that implicit biases can seep into remote and virtual settings and the limitations of developing holistic relationships with students. While we may not have any concrete suggestions for addressing these experiences, it's essential to recognize that implicit biases are present and to think of creative ways to address them in the future.

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Fostering an Anti-Racist and Inclusive Living-Learning Community

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Introduction

All too often, universities turn their attention to equity considerations only when the latter acquire a new-found urgency. And, to be sure, with COVID-19 and an escalation in incidents of racial violence, we find ourselves in precisely such a moment. Otherwise, for the most part, institutions of higher education are content to treat the equity-imperative as a separate agenda-item, tagged on as an addendum, an after-thought, to the institution's 'primary' vision. When, however, universities are compelled by their faculty, staff, students, or even by larger national developments, to answer for their complicity in preserving racial inequities, they respond hurriedly, in an attempt to overcompensate for their history of having ignored this urgent necessity for so long. In the bargain, however, they end up amalgamating measures for improving inclusion indices that are not much more than symbolic gestures (Newkirk, 2019) – half-baked, slap-dash, and ultimately counterproductive.

Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt's satirical piece in *Inside Higher Ed* (2019) deftly draws attention to the tragi-comic reality of how universities are more invested in marketing diversity than practicing it. For instance, as Heather Dotchel (2020), host of the podcast *Higher Voltage* discusses, in an effort to capture their "aspirational campuses," universities produce and market materials that "grossly misrepresent" campus demographics, as well as "exploit current student populations" to do so. And, most frustratingly of all, even when institutional commitments to equity and social justice do move forward, they are invariably diluted into and substituted by diversity rhetoric, whose "language of appeasement" (Stewart, 2017) and palatable focus on civil discourse (Bailey, 2020) does the work of only further alienating and tokenizing the university's marginalized population groups. The feminist scholar Sara Ahmed argues that "diversity" has become a comfortable word; one that "becomes detached" from histories of struggle from scary words such as "power and inequality," that loses its "edge of critique, allowing institutions to be reinhabited as softer spaces" (Ahmed 2012, p. 66). Damon Williams is right, then, to suggest that diversity plans so often succumb to "superficial implementation" and predictably enough fail because they "lack accountability." investment of resources, or a collective buy-in from the broader campus (Williams 2013, p. 177).

As Purdue Honors College's inaugural Dean, and its Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), we recognize the validity of the critiques of DEI initiatives in higher education and share much of the skepticism towards them. At the same time, we are committed in our belief that universities can and must articulate, develop, and foster equity-minded and equity-practicing campuses; or, in the words of Deborah S. Willis, we "stay committed to playing," even when we're surrounded by apathy, opposition, and failure (Willis, 2018). In fact, it is precisely through an untrammeled appraisal of equity initiatives, and a relentless pursuit of doing better than we have done so far, that academic institutions have any hope of giving students the kind of education they need and deserve. An education that encourages a critical self-awareness, and the ability to locate ourselves within the intellectual, ethical, and political questions of our times. Our commitment to getting the DEI agenda right is rooted in the

idea that the university is not a cocoon from the world, but an investigative pathway into it - a space that can empower us to imagine, demand, and collaboratively work towards a more just world. Such an agenda can succeed only when it invites *and* trains every stakeholder in the academic institution to address the unequal distribution of power, and the modes of oppression that accompany it in local and global contexts, and to implement individual and collective strategies for countering them in both our personal and professional/academic lives.

The Honors College is intentionally designed as such a space to build a community that is noted for inclusivity and fostering an anti-racist environment. As Purdue's only interdisciplinary college, the goal has been to break down barriers across not only curriculum and learning but also in the context of developing scholars to be citizens of the world, interculturally aware and flexible, creative thinkers. When the College was established in 2013, we were presented with a rare opportunity – to build from ground-up a new college in which inclusion and equity were, from the very outset, embedded into the institution's foundational principles and daily practices. Most crucially, we were cognizant of the need to establish an interdependent academic, residential, and programmatic culture in which the work of diversity and inclusion was not reduced to a buzzword or entailed tokenizing minorities.

COVID-19 and racist violence triggered unprecedented crises in higher education; this demands an all-hands-and-resources-on-deck kind of response. At the same time, it is crucial that in attending to an immediate catastrophe, we do not lose sight of the long and arduous battle against racial, educational, health-care inequities that predated the pandemic, and which have only been exacerbated by it. A crisis-management approach within higher education to post-pandemic manifestations of racism and racial violence will only offer stopgap measures that do not equip us to withstand pandemics of the future. Instead, a steadfast, institution-wide, multi-level vision for an anti-racist institution offers a far more effective modality of engagement, even in the post-COVID-19 era. A vision which engages with the complexity of the problem, designs short-term and long-term action plans to address it, one which directs resources and energies to building self-sustaining structures and programs, will be far more adept at responding to immediate crises. In sharing some of the key components of our areas of focus in the past few years, we hope to encourage other colleges to undertake a similarly sustained approach, instead of a crisis-determined one.

We discuss the key strategies deployed and the deeply entrenched processes established in order to develop an against-the-grain, assertive, and unapologetically anti-racist, inclusive, living-learning community at Purdue's Honors College. What follows in the next section is a description of our principles that guided the development of our clear and complex vision for racial inclusivity. Next, we delineate the ways in which we set that vision into practice, in particular regarding faculty hiring and development. Finally, we discuss how we embedded the vision into the college's anti-racist programming for Honors College students. In sharing these multi-pronged administrative, pedagogical, and co-curricular approaches by which the college worked to strengthen its commitment to an anti-racism in the five years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we make a case for a sustained, institutional-level engagement with race, racism, and anti-racism.

Developing an Anti-Racist Vision for Inclusion

In order to take on the centuries-old, hydra-headed monster of structural racism, a college requires three things: a clear imagination, on the part of its administrators, of the kind of institution it wants to be and where in its list of priorities it features an anti-racist politics. In other words, will the institution continue to put its weight behind its equity-imperative, even when it is presented with opportunities, that although potentially exciting, might create an impediment in the pursuit of racial inclusion?

Second, it must take seriously the critiques and limits of dominant DEI initiatives undertaken across college campuses. This is why, in formulating an anti-racist vision for the Honors College, the list of "Don'ts" was as critical to our design, as the "Dos." It was only in categorically rejecting dominant and inadequate iterations of DEI that we were able to develop a rigorous anti-racist vision. Third, as the old adage goes: an institution must be willing to *put its money where its mouth is*, or as Beth McMurtrie puts it, the institution's commitment to racial equity and inclusion must be "more than just a plan on paper." (McMurtrie, 2016).

In developing our theoretical and practical vision for an anti-racist interdisciplinary college, attending to the following four guiding principles enabled us to device a strategic plan that constantly pushes against superficial DEI initiatives, in favor of one that is both broad-spectrum and deep, reiterative, rigorous, and unafraid to undertake difficult decisions and conversations in all areas of its functioning.

Create a Shared Vocabulary and Commitment

For a DEI vision to succeed, it requires that at least a majority, if not all, stakeholders of the college are able to comprehend the broad strokes of the vision, as well as articulate its key features through a vocabulary that is shared with and made accessible to them. This is why, in January 2020, at the College's annual retreat at which all administrators, faculty and staff were present, we conducted a special session on the College's semantic choices (*equity* instead of equality; *inclusion* instead of acceptance; *anti-racist* instead of not racist). In collaboratively discussing the ethical and tactical efficacy of each linguistic framing, we were able to:

a) Gain a college-wide, basic-level, investment in the idea that the language we use matters and is more than just a question of semantics;
b) Initiate a college-wide conversation about the need to adopt a shared and standardized approach to inclusion, no matter what our individual role in the college;
c) Move beyond the "rhetoric of diversity" in favor of a focus on equity and social justice, and most crucially, to make the college's investment in those distinctions ubiquitously known.

Prioritize and visualize the institution's anti-racist commitment

Sometimes, in an attempt to undertake a comprehensive approach to inclusion, colleges and universities submerge their commitment to racial equity and anti-racism into a long checklist of "discriminations" they stand against. This kind of a de-prioritized approach can very easily devolve into a diffused, unfocused, non-deliberate legalese, or an "all lives matter" type of discourse that delegitimizes anti-racist struggles. Furthermore, it ignores the fact that there are certain forms of discrimination that institutions are far more comfortable acknowledging and tackling than some others; as Kalwant Bhopal's (2019) work has demonstrated, for instance, in equity work, gender invariably supersedes, and is privileged over, race as a priority. Our policy, instead, has been to expressly articulate the need to center anti-racism, and to make explicit the racist underpinnings of many kinds of discrimination and oppression that women, first-generation, indigenous, international, queer and trans students face. We have a two-fold approach to achieve this: to cultivate a fearless capacity to name the need of the hour – in this case, an anti-racist politics implemented in policy and practice – that is, simultaneously, committed to creating a non-competitive relationship between the needs of

differently marginalized students. This is why we focus on the networks of support and solidarity that they can build to advocate collectively, and to effect change for all.

Evolve a Proactive (Not Just a Reactive) Inclusion Plan

Some of our College's earliest, most successful programming was organized in response to national-level and campus-specific current events. In early 2017, when President Trump announced the "Muslim Travel Ban" which prevented citizens from various Islamic countries to travel to the U.S. and declared his intention to build a wall on the U.S/Mexico border, we organized a panel "The Border and the Ban" with faculty and community members who discussed the repercussions of these policies and discourse in people professional and personal lives. Similarly, next year, an anti-Semitic incident occurred in our College at around the same time that white supremacist posters had started appearing all over campus. As a rejoinder, we organized a panel discussion titled "Hate Speech/Free Speech: What's at Stake and Why We Should Care," with faculty and administrators as panelists, all of whom explored different dimensions of the subject's relationship to, and implication for, creating an anti-racist campus. We also organized a webinar by Dr. Jamie Washington, who among other things is the President and Co-Founder of the Social Justice Training Institute. His session on "Racist Messages on Campus: Respond, Recover, and Rebuild from Vandalism, Symbols & Slurs" offered critical frameworks for examining campus bigotry, effective tools for how to respond quickly and aggressively to incidents of hate. Each of these events, open to everyone on campus and in the Greater Lafayette Area (the host region for Purdue), were attended by over a hundred people, and established the Honors College as a vibrant node in the ecology of the university/city. As a college, we also worked with our residence partners to develop a response protocol, in case we were faced with a similar situation again.

At the same time, however, we recognized the self-limiting power of these high-profile, much publicized events that merely adhered to what Williams calls the "Diversity Crisis Model" – reactive plans that are more about "immediate gratification" than "long-term success" (Williams, 2013, p. 164). While these events help put the Honors College on the university map and established us as a college committed to engaging with contemporary global, national, and local issues, they did not necessarily offer preemptive or proactive interventions in fostering an anti-racist campus culture. Plus, it was too easy for such programming to fall into the "one-and-done" category. This is why we shifted our strategic focus to developing multi-part series – "Diversity Matters Series" in Fall, and "Politics of Love" and "Body Matters" in Spring of each academic year. These series accommodate the vagaries, the ups and downs in current affairs into broader, ongoing conversations; conversations that are not held hostage to the intermittent need for knee-jerk responses, in which good intentions fizzle out as the momentum wanes. Instead, these series turn the work of DEI into everyday work that transpires routinely, irrespective of whether the spotlight is cast upon it or not.

Undertake a Multi-Pronged Approach to Addressing Racism

Accept the ubiquity of racism and its institutional-structural operation as your starting points. This is the simplest way to honor the experiences and intellectual labor of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), and writers and scholars who have painstakingly explained, proved, demonstrated, and analyzed the pervasive inescapability of racism. Viji Sathy, Kelly A, Hogan and Calvin M. Sims remind us that the experiences of racism are not just a matter of isolated experiences or anecdotes; it does not just exist "out there," but pervades "every segment of our society and work environment, including academe" (2020).

Within academia itself, the forms and consequences of racism are countless. These range from the racism in the admissions process and the abysmal admission rates of domestic minorities (Redden, 2020; Thornhill, 2019; Gersen, 2019); the racist micro-and-macro aggressions that underrepresented students (URM) experience (New, 2015); equity concerns in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of faculty of color (Frazier, 2011; Mercado-Lopez, 2018; Rucks-Ahidiana, 2019); the uncompensated and unacknowledged labor that women of color faculty have to perform (Flaherty, 2019; Matthew, 2016); the whitewashing of courses and curriculum; to the racial gap in representation among senior administrators (Seltzer, 2017). In nearly every facet of higher education, in the interpersonal interactions that transpire within it, in the more general ideological principles that govern it, racism unremittingly co-constitutes university life. This is why the work of inclusion must be both expansive in its scope and deep in its implementation. It cannot subscribe to what Williams calls the "isolated change model" (Williams, 2013, p. 183).

These four guiding principles have aided our quest to guide the vision to develop our inclusive community. We have sought to embed and implement anti-racist measures, practices, and conversations in every dimension of the College's functioning. We have succeeded more on some fronts than others; for example, our recruitment rate for URM students is higher than the university average and we are committed to doing even better in the recruitment and retention of URM and international students. However, anti-racist inclusion-related questions are constantly front and center in our administrative decision-making and programming – we cannot allow complacency. In this way, we disrupt two predominant shortcomings that plague more mainstream DEI work: First, we are able to replace what Bailey calls the "primarily individualist notions of responsibility" with an institutional and structural approach to DEI initiatives. The work of anti-racist inclusion, then, is not left to the good-will or benevolence of individual administrators, faculty, or staff, but ingrained into the daily mechanics of the College. Second, by permeating an anti-racist inclusivity into every branch of the College's functioning, we offset the chances of anti-racist initiatives encountering diversity backlash and fatigue. It is our observation this happens when DEI measures are isolated, too few and far between – in number and rigor – or found to have no discernible impact. Diversity and bias training alone, for instance, do not deliver necessary results, and in fact fail in response to cultures of complacency and hostility, because they do not address systemic obstacles of inclusion (Gardenswartz & Rowe, n.d.).

Vision Into Practice: Faculty Recruitment, Retention, and Development for Inclusivity

Integral to Purdue Honors College's multi-pronged approach has been to recognize that it is not simply enough to undertake singular initiatives directed at a particular unit-level or population group in the college. In fact, what is required is a multi-dimensional addressal of equity even within a single branch of the college's functioning. This is best exemplified in the College's engagement with faculty recruitment, retention, and development.

First and foremost, we approached building our faculty for the new College with a mindset that we would strive to be among the most diverse faculties on Purdue's campus (and among Purdue's 62 departments that serve undergraduate students, we are). We embedded diversity for interdisciplinary areas of specialty in addition to the core value of pursuing representational diversity and hiring faculty of color. We did not limit our searches to the region, instead, we conducted national/international searches for each position, including for post-doc fellows. By opening up our searches' scope, we intentionally invested in recruitment of both domestic URM faculty and international faculty of color. This, in turn, helped foster a culture of non-competition between domestic and international minority faculty. Investment in hiring and fostering excellence with young faculty of color is our strategy. As Newkirk reminds us, institutions often veer to courting the "biggest names" and "proven stars in their

field" – a strategy that can be nominal and tokenizing in terms of DEI faculty (Newkirk, 2019). At the Purdue Honors College, we have, instead, focused our energies on hiring and cultivating "emerging scholars." By investing in the career trajectories of early and mid-career faculty of color, we hope to participate in a process that normalizes, rather than exceptionalizes, their presence within the academy, and pushes against their minoritization within most academic institutions.

At the same time, we recognize the structural inequities by which faculty of color are very often disadvantaged in recruitment processes. One of the ways in which this is done is through a subliminal/unstated reliance on the discriminatory logic that the pursuit of representational diversity compromises academic excellence. At the Purdue Honors College, we reject this logic, and strongly believe that scholarly rigor and excellence and the inclusion of communities, voices, and ideas that have been historically marginalized are inextricably bound together. We support that black and brown faculty must be recognized and honored for the wide range of their scholarly commitments and outputs. A true racial diversification of faculty entails not insisting on seeing faculty of color only as spokespersons for diversity or valuing their research and teaching only when it fits DEI-centered thematic. We are now in our eighth year and have retained all our faculty members; we believe that our inclusive, anti-racist environment as well as unwavering commitment to faculty development and support is the reason.

Faculty Development and Inclusive Pedagogy

In a relatively short time-frame, the Honors College's teaching unit has accomplished the unique task of establishing the legitimacy, necessity and popularity of a curriculum that is interdisciplinary, offering students critical thinking skills and the ability to grapple with challenging social problems across a range of historical and geographic contexts. As a College that prides itself for being on the frontlines of pedagogical innovations and creative, collaborative instruction, our faculty is encouraged first and foremost to build out their academic profiles as professors of practice. In this regard, all faculty are expected to pursue pedagogy-focused development and scholarship opportunities. Since Fall 2019, we turned our attention to building in-house pedagogical initiatives that were focused on questions of inclusion and racial equity. Given the variety in the faculty's disciplinary and pedagogical backgrounds, several faculty members of the college acknowledged the need to collectively develop shared imaginative and technical knowledge for incorporating strategies of inclusivity and equity in the classroom in order to best facilitate difficult conversations, especially those pertaining to matters of race. We recognized that successful inclusion efforts in course planning and classroom facilitation require a commitment to, training for, and regular practice of strategies that enable us to achieve this task.

At the same time, it is also integral to the College's pursuit of racial equity, that this work does not always and only get done by faculty of color, or singularly by faculty whose administrative responsibility it is to undertake such work. Through the inclusive-pedagogy focused faculty development initiatives, then, we sought to "diversify diversity work," by involving faculty of different racial identities, and in different stages of their careers. In doing so, we resist the predominant model of diversity work, where it is precisely the faculty of color who *lead the very efforts that are intended to retain them*. This, as Mercado-Lopez suggests, perpetuates the vicious cycle where the support these faculty, then, receive from the university "is dependent on their own abilities to sustain those efforts" (2018). We were eager to not replicate that pattern.

Anti-Racist and Inclusivity Development

There are myriad ways to foster faculty development, including across curricular and co-curricular approaches. Each faculty member also has programmatic responsibilities, such as guiding undergraduate research or aiding peer-to-peer mentoring, and these approaches provide a mechanism to address multiple learning goals. A particularly effective way we use is that of workshops. These are not simply single events but rather ways to bring together faculty, staff, students, and sometimes external community members or alums and other partners to learn and grow together. Much attention and intention are brought to design and implementation of these workshops, including that some are funded via nationally competitive funding sources. In other words, faculty development is taken as seriously as efforts in research or other dimensions such as service learning and are combined in some cases to support the scholar teacher model of learning. The following two types of development approaches and workshops are discussed: those for intercultural education and those for inclusive pedagogy.

Intercultural Education and Awareness

Intercultural awareness and learning–in curricular and co-curricular programming were important components of our vision and strategic plan, from the very inspection of our college. We recognize that it is not enough to simply acknowledge that intercultural differences exist and celebrate them; rather, we seek to create culturally attuned understanding of how structures of power operate in trans-cultural and global contexts, in order to empower all members of our community.

While the Honors College stated from its beginning that intercultural education is a vital goal and instrumental part of our vision, it had a slow start. A few workshops on intercultural competency were provided, using a national nonprofit group for training for all faculty, staff and students at the time. Further, a co-curricular program, "Cultural Companions" provided mentoring opportunities for members of the College to engage with international students. We were a much smaller community then and these efforts did help build some bridges across differences and encouraged more connections between students, faculty and staff but it was not enough to make significant progress.

This changed last year when we hired an Associate Dean for International Education and Affairs. Now at a point where we can make explicit our goals to embed intercultural education across the College, we are moving ahead rapidly in supporting faculty development in these areas. Courses have been developed to include more components of intercultural education across topics, and a course specifically to aid the goal of enhancing and expanding intercultural education and awareness is offered. Learning Across Differences focuses on the development of intercultural awareness, intercultural attitudes, and intercultural skills, including communication, leadership, and empathy, through engagement with events, centers, and resources at Purdue and online. Due to COVID-19, this course is now offered online and efforts to encourage community building in a virtual format include an exchange component. This offers students practice in communicating across cultures, experiencing new perspectives, and appreciating cultural differences and helps students broaden leadership capacities, prepare for participation in Study Away experiences, and those seeking to improve intercultural competencies for living and working in a diverse world. Each student is encouraged to develop individual intercultural development goals that will be actioned through personal experiences and reflections and supported by class discussions and course readings. In addition to curricular approaches, the Associate Dean (also a member of the faculty), in collaboration with the postdoc candidate in a joint appointment between the Honors College and the University's Center for Intercultural Learning, Mentorship, Assessment and Research (CILMAR), and the College's Director

of DEI, organized a series of intercultural workshops and approaches to foster more awareness and understanding. These workshops are open to faculty, staff, and students as well as others in the Purdue community and provide opportunities to explore and learn about intercultural differences at an impactful level.

Co-curricular opportunities also provide ways to help faculty development as well. For example, several faculty members work closely with international and intercultural awareness programming or events, including in the recently formed Global House. During the pandemic, Global House is a virtual community of both domestic and international students who are committed to building community with their fellow students and connecting to faculty members. A peer-to-peer mentoring program offers new beginners/first-year students small, structured group mentoring.

There are additional programs that enable faculty development in other units across the College. Housed in the undergraduate research and creative endeavors unit, the Visiting Scholars program engages faculty and students in deep immersion into an issue provided by a scholar from another university or organization. Multiple scholars have visited, and this provides opportunities for our College's faculty to partner and build connections. A faculty member oversees this program, and the emphasis is on learning and pedagogical advances.

Inclusive Pedagogy

The Director of DEI, and an early career faculty member developed and facilitated a three-part workshop series on Inclusive Pedagogy for Honors College faculty. The first workshop, on "Building an Inclusive Syllabus" discussed not only ways to embedded anti-racist and decolonial components into course materials, but also helped faculty explore ways to incorporate inclusive policies into their syllabus; to convert the usual university legalese into inclusive frameworks that actually invite students to seek out university resources; and that help establish the faculty as equity-minded and approachable. We also shared strategies for how to do a "syllabus walk-through" on day one of a course, so as to embed a culture of racial inclusivity from the first day itself. The second workshop attended to the importance of difficult and brave conversations that did not shy away from engaging with questions of race, racism, and anti-racism, in instructor-led classroom discussions, in group-work between students, and in interactions between faculty and students outside the classroom. The third workshop focused on ways to support and center international students, that went beyond the cliched recommendations. The workshop encouraged faculty to engage seriously with the implications of identifying a vast, heterogenous group from exceedingly disparate geographical, cultural, political contexts under the umbrella term of international students. The workshop also equipped faculty to take on board the US's complicated relationship with this student demographic, whereby they are identified as both desirable and dangerous (Boggs, 2020).

All three workshops were careful to distinguish between the more dominant/generic frameworks of inclusion in the classroom – which reduce inclusion to tokenistic, symbolic gestures – from the more radical, authentically anti-racist pedagogical approaches, which are invested in a critical transformation of both faculty and student, in consciousness and classroom practices. In a post-workshop survey conducted by the facilitators, participants were asked if they had found this distinction valuable. Of the eleven workshop participants, eight responded to the survey, and a 100% of them selected the "very valuable" option in the grade-scale (the other options being "not valuable" and "somewhat valuable"). One respondent also mentioned this distinction in their response to the question "How, if at all, has your understanding of inclusive pedagogy changed based on participating in the workshops?". They wrote: "My biggest takeaway is that the "inclusive" pedagogy that is the fall back, generic version with which we are most familiar stops short of and even impedes the goals of true inclusion. So, the

workshops destabilized my idea of what inclusive pedagogy is and should be—in a very productive way." In response to the question "How do you imagine yourself incorporating key takeaways from the workshop(s) within your classroom", one respondent identified "radical inclusivity" as the "goal," from "which everything else really flows."

Furthermore, in keeping with the college's commitment to engaging with the question of anti-racism both at a theoretical and practical level, the workshops too equipped faculty to deliberate on inclusive pedagogy as an ethical and ideological question, as well as in terms of a best practices that are attentive to the political nuances of their implementation. As one of the survey respondents noted, the workshops were "A good combination of conceptual and concrete work." One respondent said that the workshops offered both "useful tools and frameworks" for doing this kind of work.

What the workshops were most successful in establishing was the need to be explicit in articulating and intentional in implementing inclusive and anti-racist practices. Six of the eight respondents identified this as the things that had changed in their understanding of inclusive pedagogy based on their participation in the workshops. One respondent wrote: "The workshops got me to think much more intentionally and carefully about how broader frameworks connect to my practices in class." Another participant said that the workshops helped them recognize the need to "make the implicit explicit in my pedagogy – yes, many of the things I already do in the classroom align, but I need to continually note what I do (and do not do) and routinely examine it." Another wrote that the workshops helped:

> "Faculty think about inclusion through each stage of instruction, from course design, to syllabus day, to day-to-day in the classroom, to office hours and beyond. The facilitators showed us that inclusion comes through deliberate and demonstrable action, beyond statements on paper or even the 'good intentions' of an instructor."

A realization that good intentions are not enough when it comes to the work of inclusion and equity was noted by another faculty participant who wrote:

> "I had a false sense that I designed inclusive learning environments within my courses because of my own identity as a marginalized minority faculty member…. While I believe I had good intentions, this series of workshops has helped me understand the necessity of making my beliefs, practices, and pedagogy related to inclusion explicit to students."

Ultimately, the workshops were successful because they established the inclusion and equity imperative in undergraduate student instruction, not as a matter that can be 'fixed' merely by introducing supplementary units in the curriculum. Neither was this imperative relegated to the monopoly of certain disciplines or types of courses. Instead, the workshops were able to demonstrate for faculty that no matter what their discipline, these questions needed to be brought front-and-center into their courses. Further, doing this work well required that faculty undertake a self-reflective and deliberate revision of their own assumptions, views about race, racial and ethnic minorities, domestic and international students, and incorporate those revisions into their classroom practices.

Implementing a vision does not always follow a clear or directional path. For our College, we believed strongly that we have to be explicit in our intentions by hiring diverse faculty members and providing continuing support. Not only does our faculty represent interdisciplinary and diversity, but they also work closely with our staff and students, as well as members across the university and beyond, to actualize the College's inclusive vision. We noted earlier that there are three major areas where we

have designed and implemented racial inclusivity vision: within the vision and plans themselves; faculty hiring and development, and anti-racist programming for students. Faculty influence and help guide across administrative, pedagogical, and co-curricular approaches to turn vision into action and outcomes; we believe strongly that implementing inclusive faculty hiring and development approaches has enabled us to achieve our vision.

Anti-Racist Programming for Students: Student Diversity Officers and the Diversity and Inclusion Team

The college's unique Diversity and Inclusion team was established in 2017. The team brings together multiple stakeholders: The Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (also faculty member), six Student Diversity Officers (SDOs), and a staff member–the Student Leadership and Engagement Manager. Since 2017, the team has conducted over 60 events – teach-ins, panel discussions, workshops, webinars, reading groups, film screenings, networking events addressing issues of structural and interpersonal racism, that are meant to educate and equip everyone in the college, and in the larger university community, to have meaningful and effective conversations about issues of social justice. These events are open to all college members, the wider university community, and members of the host region, thus transforming the Honors College into a vibrant node in the ecology of the university/city. The team has collaborated with over 15 campus partners (including Black and Latino cultural centers, Disability Resource Center, campus's Diversity Division, LGBTQ center, Islamic Center). Past Diversity Matters workshop topics have included microaggressions, implicit bias, privilege, disabilities, interracial relationships, allyship, the politics of love and race, and marginal identities in academic institutions, including the experience of first-generation college students.

Mentoring the SDOs

In the team's first iteration, there were only two SDOs who were selected through a rigorous application and interview process. Currently, the team consists of six SDOs, all of whom receive extensive mentorship from the Director of DEI at the College. The SDOs are extended structural-institutional support so that can enhance and implement their individual and collective anti-racist leadership mission. This ranges from ensuring that they receive student wages for the leadership work they do; training them as facilitators to conduct workshops, panels and reading groups; collaboratively building the theoretical, educational, and political arsenal they need to conduct these events. The Director of DEI meets with them as a group for weekly sessions, so that their emotional and intellectual and requirements are addressed in an ongoing way. In the meetings, we also undertake a detailed analysis, and keep a running roster of every lesson learned from events already conducted.

A critical component of cultivating anti-racist student leadership at the Purdue Honors College is to give students both the autonomy and the power to collectively determine and execute a student-centered programmatic vision. This is why, each semester, the SDOs, in consultation with the Director of DEI and the Student Leadership Engagement Manager, devise the thematic focus and details of the events they want to conduct. It is their plan that is developed and supported with the college's resources and administrative-academic buttressing. Equally important to the college's goal is that the work the SDOs do as student leaders is acknowledged, fore-fronted and celebrated. This is why their leadership roles are highlighted on the College website, and widely dispersed on Honors College's social media. This is also why we organize a "Meet the SDOs" dinner at the start of every semester, and why we do our diversity initiatives with the tagline: "Student Diversity Officers Present." A combination of these factors is what has led to the exceptional success of the ten SDOs that the College has hired thus far.

They have been able to develop and execute ideas the team generates, but also ideate and implement their own vision, initiate original strategies (an SDO newsletter, the Minority-Students Study Table, research about the experiences of women of color – students and faculty – in STEM fields and social sciences). The wide range and rigor of the events they organize is once again, a testament to the success of this leadership development model.

More broadly, the Director of DEI's role is geared towards fomenting a college-wide commitment to advocating for the representation and inclusion of vulnerable students, as well as building solidarity and networks whereby these students can find a collective voice. Development of student leadership is possible only in a cultural context where all students, especially those most precarious by virtue of the intersectional workings of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, gender or sexuality, feel secure and supported. Additionally, our goal is to build a living learning environment where it is not individualized, tokenized leaders who emerge, but one in which *all* students build communal ties and instate creative collaboration; where speaking up and out, collectively, for issues of equality and social justice is seen as the way forward and extends to life beyond the university.

Peer-to-Peer Advocacy and Difficult Conversations

The Honors College designed and implemented a peer-to-peer model of academic and co-curricular mentoring beginning with its first incoming class. Training is provided for the students involved in the mentoring program, and because of success, nearly 300 Honors students are conversant in the basics of diversity and inclusion in the context of peer group work. We believe strongly in the effectiveness of peer-to-peer mentoring and the DEI team both participates in training the larger academic mentoring program participants as well as working with their own diversity mentoring team. The DEI team's deeper success has been to normalize a college culture where students, faculty and staff directly engage with historical and current manifestations of racism, where speaking up and speaking out on issues of racial equality racial justice are treated as priority. Several critical pedagogy scholars emphasize the value of employing peer-educators to cultivate young leaders (see, for example, Haber; Jenkins; Boud). And yet, very few scholars have considered the important role that peer-to-peer education can play in diversifying "diversity work." Ordinarily, the work of building inclusive communities and learning environments falls on the shoulders of community activists and diversity officers, who are, often, themselves people of color and members of marginalized communities.

In this context, we have developed a relatively unexplored and under-utilized model of peer-to-peer education for teaching issues of race, inclusion, privilege, and discrimination. In doing so, we hope to distribute more widely, and involve young people in, the responsibility of building community across social and political divides in the Greater Lafayette Area. Purdue's host region is deeply entangled with the history of racism in the US, from the large presence and power of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) in Indiana in the early 20th century, to the more recent, yet persistent, appearance of KKK flyers in downtown Lafayette (Bangert 2020). In using peer-to-peer conversations and workshops centered around questions of race, we offer young adults the opportunity to witness people their age making critical interventions in difficult, yet important, conversations, and experience a boost in their own sense of preparedness and confidence to do so. At the same time, learning from their peers allows issues surrounding race, bias, color blindness and privilege to be absorbed more directly and collaboratively.

The SDO-led workshops are thus explicitly designed to equip and empower other young adults to transform moments of tension, difficulty, and emotional-political challenges into occasions to build solidarity across differences. We feel that an important part of the SDO program is to have students apply, be interviewed, selected and trained to serve in these roles as *paid team members of the Honors*

College. The team's SDOs are given wages for their labor of strengthening the college's anti-racist commitment and receive extensive mentorship from the faculty-administrator. We are not asking students to take on more than they already do – these are paid positions for students to build valuable professional development skills while at the same time fostering skill development among their peers.

Facilitating Conversations

We find that many undergraduate students at the Honors College are interested in developing their understanding of race and racism in the US, but often do not feel comfortable initiating and facilitating these conversations on their own. Their hesitancy is often a result of the tacit culture of silence that surrounds these issues, as well as young people's sense that they lack the theoretical frameworks and practical knowledge for undertaking this difficult task (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006). In our experiences as anti-racist educators, we have observed that young people consistently express discomfort, or experience fear, at the prospect of making others uncomfortable in talking about race. This overwhelming anxiety about giving and taking offense can ultimately bolster racism in that it allows young people to avoid interrogating their assumptions about race and racial differences. What is unsettling is that individuals, especially from dominant groups, often experience conversations around race as personal attacks. This is what Robin DiAngelo refers to as "white fragility" -- white people's response of disbelief, defensiveness, or feeling hurt when they are challenged about their understanding of race or implicated in white supremacy (DiAngelo, 2018). Thus, the workshops facilitated by the SDOs seek to equip young adults with tools for self-reflection and supportive dialogue in order to transform moments of fragility into productive opportunities for structural analysis.

These peer-led workshops are especially valuable for young adults, given that they are in the process of formulating their values and exploring different modes of engagement with the world. Additionally, many young adults recognize that their future goals, aspirations, work contexts, and community settings are going to involve collaborating with people from socio-culturally diverse groups, as well as having discussions where disagreements will be inevitable. In this context, these workshops offer concrete strategies for developing skill sets that empower young people to better navigate their personal and professional experiences. Addressing and equipping young adults to undertake the important work of engaging in difficult conversations about race, then, can have a far-reaching impact, not only in their own lives, but also for their peers.

Summary

Racism is not going to abate until explicit intentional actions are undertaken. COVID-19 and racial violence and unrest have brought to light even more so the underlying structural imbalances existing in higher education. This is a pivotal time in our history, and unprecedented in higher education administration. We can seize the day and make real change or can approach it as we have in the past that have not served the academy in making progress towards inclusion and diversity.

We provide insight into how we have fostered an anti-racist and inclusive community at the Purdue Honors College. There are three major areas we focused on to guide our development First are our principles guiding vision and strategic action for racial inclusivity. The second is translating vision into practice by focusing on hiring diverse faculty and supporting their development. The third centers on anti-racist programming for students. The combination of these three areas enabled us to move forward and create a community that is noted for its inclusiveness, diversity and anti-racist stance backed by action and impact.

Researchers' Positionality: We created these programs as part of our new college to strive for an inclusive, equitable environment for all and especially for students to have opportunities to grow in their awareness and skills for supporting social justice, equity and inclusion. As dean and director of DEI for the college, we are strongly committed to these efforts. We acknowledge any biases as our own and not emanating from our employer or others.

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Disrupting Native Invisibility, Dismantling Settler Colonial Racism and Enhancing Educational Outcomes for Indigenous Students

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Introduction

The coronavirus crisis revealed profound societal fissures and further deepened pre-existing inequities in terms of employment, healthcare, housing and education. The early phases of the crisis brought attention to Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) who disproportionately constitute the most vulnerable and least visible. The particular impact, most notable in rural areas with limited access to quality public services like health and education, is stark.

Virulent diseases have a long and traumatic history for Indigenous communities. The first two COVID-19 relief bills had no mention of Native Americans (Fickes, 2020). However, when the media finally picked up reporting on the widespread impact of COVID-19 on Indian Country the focus problematized native peoples, native culture, and the conditions of their lives, rendering invisible the colonial legacy that furthers BIPOC's vulnerability.

The goal of this analysis is to disrupt the dominant narrative perpetuating notions of dependency and need i.e. what Echo Hawk (2020) terms the 'Broken Indian" narrative and rather focus on the organizing efforts of native activists which harnesses and enhances cultural assets and resiliency in order to take care of the community. What is specifically examined here is how these efforts have fortified Indigenous students' resolve to successfully stay academically engaged and earn their degrees at a south-west minority serving university. The cultural resources forming the bedrock of the organizing within Indian Country aligns with what Native American scholar Gerald Vizenor terms *survivance.* "Survivance captures the creative resilience of Indigenous people of the Americas against cultural and physical extermination" (as cited in Halaka, 2015).

Method

Recorded interviews and conference presentations by Indigenous activists, politicians and academics confronting the COVID -19 crisis are analyzed to explore the impacts of the crisis on student academic outcomes. Interviews appeared in media outlets including *Democracy Now!, Race Forward* Conference, *Native America Calling* and Town Hall Forums organized by *Indian Country Today* and Illumi*Native*. The interviewees include Leah Salgado of Illumi*Native*, Crystal Echo Hawk, Oklahoma Pawnee Nation member and president of Illumi*Native*, Allie Young, Navajo activist and founder of *Protect the Sacred*, Jodi Archambault, citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and former special assistant to President Obama for Native American Affairs, Diana Cournoyer, Oglala Sioux Tribe member and executive director of the *National Indian Education Association*, and Emma Roberts, member of the Navajo Nation and director of the *Navajo Water Project*. Analysis of the interviews utilized grounded theory to code and create themes emerging from the data. Two main theoretical themes surfaced, categorized as *Settler Colonialism* and *Survivance*. Each of these themes are

characterized by aspects constituting the overall categories (see Figure 1) which are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Figure 1. *Theoretical Themes*

SETTLER COLONIALISM	SURVIVANCE
Invisibility	**Autonomous Organizing**
	closing borders
	internal fund raising
	alternative health responses
	young activists
Dependency Narrative	**Cultural Revitalization**
welfare	desires of young people
poverty	cultural assets
Material Conditions as a Legacy of Colonialism	**Changing Narratives**
disease & genocide	truth narratives
mining	storytelling
limited resources	
health care	
education	
infrastructure	
food deserts	

Settler Colonization and The Broken Indian Trope

Colonialism and settler colonialism are constituted by distinct characteristics while simultaneously existing in a dialectical relationship (Veracini, 2011). Colonialism establishes domination which includes displacement of native populations and unequal relations. Colonizers are dispatched to occupy a new locale in turn enacting a sustained process to determine their hegemony. In contrast, the relations between settler colonialists and Indigenous populations are shaped by the recurring need to disavow the presence of Indigenous 'others' (Veracini, 2011), thus invisibility is at the heart of the relationship within the Americas.

Invisibility persists as an ongoing project to maintain and enrich domination and the goals of settler colonialism. This intentional strategy of settler colonialism rests on the preoccupation with replacing the circumstances of the way it functions. To achieve this a settler colonial structure employs various mechanisms including creating independent nations and rendering invisible Indigenous peoples (exemplified in the Zionist mantra of settling a "land without a people for a people without a land" and in the U.S. Manifest Destiny). Moreover, settler colonial systems meticulously subjugate, appropriate and expire Indigenous 'others' specifically through forced displacement (e.g. The Trail of Tears, The Long Walk; creation of reservations) exile and genocide (e.g. war/violence/sexual assault/population control/introducing and (mis)managing diseases). As a result, Indigenous populations constitute just slightly above 2% of the entire nation's population (World Population Review, 2020). All of these strategies are enacted with the goal to shift from a settler colonial status to a settled or postcolonial state of being (Veracini, 2011).

However, when Indigenous disadvantage is visible, the machinations of settler colonialism are too made visible. The well documented inequities exacerbated by COVID-19 and the continued presence of Indigenous peoples stand as reminders of the blood spilled in the making of the United States. It is only when Indigenous disadvantage, inequity and destruction are illuminated that settler colonialism is most recognizable.

The persistent preoccupation to drive away original inhabitants, as central to settler colonization, engenders the perception and representation of native peoples as fragile. This fragility trope is what Echo Hawk (2020) terms the *Broken Indian* narrative and what Salgado (2020) terms the *deficit* narrative where the focus is on need, poverty and welfare of the communities who as a result necessitate saving. During the twentieth century indigeneity, "has been inherently connected to a perception of vulnerability. Fragility fundamentally defines the 'Indigenous', both in its relation against the settler colonizers and against the emerging nationalist majorities of the postcolonial world" (Veracini 2011: 4).

Disadvantages cast as a result of a *culture of poverty* obscure the root causes engendered by settler colonialism and leave unchecked the systemic legacies of colonization. Thus, these inequities, illuminated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are mis-represented as the cause of the disproportionate impacts and are conceptualized using notions of dependency and powerlessness. The paucity of resources exciting on many reservations and pueblos are a direct result of mining, uranium extraction and contamination and abandonment of treaty agreements. In turn the weakened infrastructures including health, water, communication systems, education and resultant food deserts persist for many in Indian Country.

In March, COVID-19 struck Indian Country hard, particularly for the nation's largest Indigenous reservation, the Navajo Nation which endured one of the worst outbreaks in the United States (Estus, 2020). After New York and New Jersey, it had the highest rate of infection at the pandemic's onset. In May 2020, 58% of New Mexico's statewide infection rate was Native American, despite the fact that Native peoples constitute 11% of the state population (Haaland, 2020).

The Navajo Nation is approximately 27,000 square miles with approximately 173,000 plus Navajo residents living on the reservation, a mere 13 grocery stores, 12 health facilities, and only 170 hospital beds, 13 Intensive Care Unit beds, 52 isolation rooms, and 28 ventilators. The devastation felt so severely in regions of Indian Country is largely due to experiencing some of the highest rates of the underlying conditions that make COVID-19 a deadly disease, e.g. diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease. The virus is affecting Indigenous people in ways that are not widely known nor understood by the rest of America. Given these circumstances the Navajo Nation worked tirelessly to flatten the curve and was able to have a day where there were zero reported cases. But, as is the situation throughout the nation, the numbers continue to wax and wane.

Despite the efforts of the Navajo Nation and the organizing throughout Indian Country, much of what the media focuses on is the lack of running water and how poor and 'backwards' the Navajo nation is. Little to no attention is paid to ongoing federal governmental relations with corporate America. The federal government opened the doors to mining companies to extract minerals on tribal reservations, thus contributing to the current crisis in Indian Country.

The Peabody Mining company operated on the Navajo Nation for over thirty years (only just shutting down in 2019), operating in the northwestern region, which consequently represents a COVID-19 national hot spot. Although the uranium mines are now closed, during the time from 1944 up until 1986, upwards of 30 million tons of uranium ore were taken from Navajo lands under leases that targeted the Nation. Many Navajo people labored in the mines while simultaneously living near the mines and mills. The contamination due to mining continues whereby over 500 abandoned mines remain and elevated levels of radiation are found in homes and water sources (Environmental Protection Agency Website, 2020).

Pulmonary and respiratory diseases rendering Native elders especially vulnerable under COVID-19 conditions, are due to decades of coal and uranium mining and water and land contamination. Rather than perpetuating the myth that vulnerable health conditions emerge from poor choices and lifestyles, these connections reveal that the preexisting and underlying conditions and increased vulnerability are a direct result of more complex structural issues.

The Navajo Nation borders many towns which are Trump strongholds. Thus, the rallies taking place in Trump territory where many individuals disregard the precautions necessary to battle the spread of the virus such as social distancing and mask wearing pose further risks. Because Navajo Nation has only ~ 13 grocery stores many people from the reservation are forced to travel into these border towns to do their shopping furthering their exposure.

Furthermore, Native casinos and hotels were shut down to protect the community, especially the elders. The closures impacted Indian Country economically in turn affecting healthcare delivery and response. For instance, The Navajo Nation was forced to put out a call for medical volunteers and for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) supplies due to a lack of the resources and funding in tribal communities. This occurs despite the guarantee of quality healthcare promised through treaties with the federal government that have fallen flat. The long-standing compromised health infrastructure means very thin health resources to respond to a crisis such as this.

Also compelling is the onslaught on Native culture due to the high death rate among elders. Indigenous cultures are in jeopardy particularly when elders are at higher risks than younger individuals. Elders carry a great deal of the knowledge and ceremonies that young people are still learning. Protecting the elders who are very vulnerable to the virus represents crucial strategies to protect the sacred. It is estimated that there may only exist ~ 15 years in ordinary conditions, to save many Indigenous languages, including Diné, the Dakota language, the Arikara, the Mandan and the Hidatsa languages (Democracy Now, 2020). Many speakers of Indigenous languages are over the age of 70 which limits the time available to spend with them and learn, protect and revitalize Indigenous

languages, ceremonial practices and overall cultural heritage. COVID-19 thus introduces an additional layer of risk, whereby leaders'/elders' vulnerability makes cultural continuance more precarious.

The virus has presented Indian Country with specific educational challenges as well. The abrupt school and workplace shutdowns and the onslaught of online education meant vast educational challenges for Indigenous students who are statistically less likely to have adequate tools and internet connectivity than other students (Hughes, 2020). Infrastructural challenges including cell phone access and affordability, broadband capability, hardware access (e.g. laptops and tablets) and ability to find quiet spaces within intergenerational households, pose compounding educational obstacles.

The circumstances are not new, but the coronavirus recession further displaced Indigenous students. The negative effects on achievement are likely to result. The degree of learning loss and drop-out rates are yet to be seen. Coupled with the achievement gap are other harder to quantify factors exacerbating the situation including social and emotional disruption by increasing isolation and anxiety related to possible job loss and the care needed for family members falling ill and passing, in turn undermining academic performance and engagement.

The South-West Context

One Navajo student's narrative illustrates the compounding consequences which pose multiple obstacles regarding academic engagement. Apryl (a pseudonym) was living ~5 hours from the main campus on the Navajo reservation; taking classes via zoom prior to the pandemic. When the pandemic hit, Apryl's place of employment shut its doors, as many did. Her employers gave prior permission to use their internet connection to conduct her studies. With no internet or cell service at her residence, the work closure left Apryl completely cut off from the university. Just prior to the university campus closure Apryl's computer had been stolen. Initially, however, she found a way to stay connected by traveling roundtrip, 80 miles to a McDonald's parking lot where she could pick up a Wifi signal on her cell phone and use Zoom to attend classes. The university pledged to find as many students computers who were in need and we wanted to send a computer to Apryl. However, the computer was unable to be delivered to her home as she had no physical address on the reservation and thus, she travelled over 100 miles roundtrip, to the town that housed her post office box in order to receive the loaner computer. And yet without internet connectivity this seemed a moot point; but Apryl made the trip and set up for classes in a family member's home where Wifi capabilities were available. All the while Apryl, who was the primary caregiver to her grandmother, was struggling to stitch together care for her amidst the loss of too many of her family members. Apryl not only stayed in school she has done exceedingly well in all of her courses. She continues her resolve to earn her college degree finishing her fall 2020 classes and registering for spring 2021 classes.

Apryl's story is extraordinary but represents the compounding factors faced by many Indigenous students. Her story is not all that unique in Indian Country. For many Indigenous students they found it difficult to continue their studies and finish out the spring 2020 semester when the virus spiked in March as illustrated in the table representing the number of incompletes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. *Spring 2020 Incompletes among Native American Students*

Spring 2020 grades: Native/Indigenous students		
	Number of Incompletes	% of total grades
Female	26	3.4%
Male	15	2.8%

Each week professors received news that one more family member had passed and the grief and emerging family responsibilities were too much to bear. And even so, many of our Indigenous students managed to remain steadfast. The retention rates among Indigenous students actually rose during the COVID-19 period at this minority serving institution (see Figure 3), begging the question, how under such harrowing circumstances have students been able to be so resilient?

The dominant narrative of dependency i.e. the *Broken Indian*, erases the positive organizing efforts of Native communities during a time of crisis by supporting themselves through internal fund raising, social media campaigns, artistic endeavors and grassroots activism. The countervailing narrative centers organizing efforts around resiliency and is solidly grounded in utilizing cultural assets. The coronavirus pandemic has magnified unique vulnerabilities but also the resilience demanded of them. It appears that this self-sufficient autonomous organizing built on culture is one of the most profound factors impacting Indigenous students' triumphs during such trying times.

Figure 3. *Fall-to-fall Retention Data for Fall 2019 Cohort of First-Year Native American Students*

Fall-to-fall retention for Native/Indigenous students		
	# in cohort	**% retained**
Female	13	53.8%
Male	9	77.8%
Total	**22**	**63.6%**

Survivance

Gerald Vizenor (2000) conceptualizes *survivance* as the active creative resilience of Indigenous peoples of the Americas in the refusal to die and disappear. This involves a struggle against cultural, psychological and physical invisibility, annihilation and absence. Thus, it is Indigenous persistence and survival that become crucial in the struggle against the settler colonialist's campaign for the Indigenous to disappear. "Resistance and survival are thus the weapons of the settler colonized; resistance and survival make certain that settler colonialism never ultimately is triumphant" (Vericini, 2011).

This central theme resonates throughout Indian Country and Indigenous activism. The anthem that "We Are Still Here" represents the will of individual strength in a collective, scaffolding the grassroots efforts to protect Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities are leading the way on how to handle the pandemic, having been through so many of them it became so much ingrained in the communities. Contrary to the popular trope, Native peoples are not passive victims in this pandemic. Rather they have pushed back and done what is necessary to protect themselves as they have done so historically despite the notion that people in America don't see Native peoples (Democracy Now, 2020).

The power of Navajo nation citizens and people across Indian Country who self-organized is seen in the fund-raising activities, alternative healthcare responses, youth and young people activism and changing narratives. The sustained resistance to settler colonialism constitutes an Indigenous response to its machinations as seen through the efforts to make visible what has been rendered historically

invisible. This recent effort draws on the cultural assets of Indigenous peoples to protect and care for their communities.

Autonomous Organizing

Tribal leaders have been preparing for Covid-19 since the virus first appeared in Wuhan, China, in late 2019. Many tribes declared a state of emergency in early March 2020, in some cases even before the Trump administration did so. Native communities came together to start collective funds when the government failed, being innovative and proactive in protecting their communities. The tribes immediately authorized funds to be set aside for setting up hospitals, preparing for the ensuing crisis. Medical staff began shoring up emergency plans, reorganizing services and gathering medical supplies, including test kits and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Some tribes and nations took the health response into their own hands amidst the failings of the federal government to provide quality care. The Lummi nation, a sovereign Native American tribe in the Pacific north-west, opened a pioneering field hospital to treat coronavirus patients. The field offices represent one among a wave of strong public health measures which have gone further than many governments (The Guardian, 2020).

Eagle Butte, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Sisseton, Wahpeton, Rosebud and the Navajo Nation among others, installed roadblocks to stop traffic and outsiders from entering the reservation. Many native tribes defied orders to remove the checkpoints set up to protect tribal members, especially elders. In one instance, the governor of South Dakota, Christie Noem in coordination with the Trump administration, made it difficult to receive federal resources allocated to the tribal governments in response to the closures, using them as leverage against the tribe in order to force them to take the roadblocks down (Democracy Now 2020). Rather than lauding the tribe's efforts to address the lack of health services available on the reservation, the governor made it more difficult for tribes to protect themselves.

Cultural Assets and Young People

Elders are cherished for the cultural and linguistic knowledge they pass on through school programs and more readily in informal ways (Estus, 2020). The unique risks posed for the elders, prompted many in Indian Country to first offer vaccines to some of the few people who speak Indigenous languages. For instance, the Indigenous language of the Cherokee is centuries old and was only a spoken language until the 1800s, when a written system was created by Sequoyah. The language nevertheless declined as Cherokees were forced out of the Eastern United States (National Public Radio, 2021). In an effort to preserve their cultural heritage, the Cherokee tribal government distributed the first vaccinations to keepers of the language.

Moreover, Indigenous leaders recognizing the importance of youth and young people's inclusion, intentionally targeted them by 'meeting them where they are'. In other words, many youth and young people are very tuned into social media and thus it is a powerful tool for connecting with and among them. Going beyond connecting however, social media was used to infuse a layering of cultural revitalization. The youth and young people are more connected to technology and information than ever and this coupled with an eagerness to reconnect to culture represented a moment to combine the two assets for successful engagement. Moreover, as Allie Young of *Protect the Sacred* states, "I often find that our Native youth…are more educated than ever. That's why there's this resistance, because we know our history and what has happened to us historically" (Democracy Now, 2020). Many younger activists of color are reconnecting with their history, culture and taking pride in their identity and heritage (Democracy Now 2020). Thus, the circumstances created by the pandemic were turned into opportunities to engage communities, particularly the youth and young people.

Successful inclusion inspiring the younger generation and cultivating leadership is demonstrated in the projects organized by Allie Young, *Protect the Sacred* and Illumi*Native's: Warrior UP*. *Protect the Sacred* emerged as healthcare professionals were concerned about the awareness regarding the harm of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation. They turned to Allie who formerly worked with the Shiprock Indian Health Service, to encourage youth and young people to become leaders in disseminating information about the virus. The Navajo Nation's president Johnathon Nez argues that partially the spread on the Navajo Nation is due to family gatherings because by nature Native peoples are social and communities are close-knit (Estus, 2020). This communal trait was recognized as a site for strengthening the response to the crisis. Seeing the 'stay-at-home' mandates as opportunities, *Protect the Sacred* harnessed the situation whereby youth and young people at home could easily communicate to other family members the importance of staying at home. Furthermore, *Protect the Sacred and Warrior UP* challenged younger folks to take advantage of the stay-at-home orders to learn about identity through the relationships with those in the family and to enhance their relationship with nature and all things living. This coupling between family as a resource of cultural knowledge along with the mandates to stay at home made for an effective tool to enhance cultural recuperation and strengthen community bonds. Young folks were urged to participate in given activities and share their stories of how they navigated the consequences of COVID-19. Thus, aspects of the culture that may originally been viewed as detrimental activities during COVID-19 were reframed as cultural assets and utilized to empower young folks and their communities. While people were asked to stay at home, *Protect the Sacred and Warrior Up* reframed these moments as an opportunity.

Changing the Narrative from the Broken Indian to Truthful Narratives of Survivance

People of Indian Country really had to push back on the *deficiency* narrative and amplify stories in the media and on podcasts that tribal communities are teeming with leaders and are resilient in light of the pandemic. The persistent dominant narrative about COVID-19 centers around the "Broken Indian' trope as identified by Crystal Echo Hawk who are in need of saving. In order to flip this script, activists created innovative ways to implant the voices of the Indigenous into the nation's cultural imagination. This is done by presenting their own stories and testimonies which are critical instruments for survival, what Crystal Echo Hawk terms the *truthful narratives.*

Cultural preservation and recuperation (Kulago, 2019) occurs through a number of different strategies utilizing both ancient and contemporary knowledge. Ceremony and language are at the foundation of Indigenous identity, but in order to maintain these aspects they must remain alive and practice (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) to counter dominant narratives. By employing memories, personal and communal stories, ancient customs and hybrid evolutions of customs and rituals, young Indigenous activists effectively develop the tools used against *forgetting*. This dialectical process to harness the desire for cultural recuperation in turn enhances recuperation (Kulago, 2019). Halaka (2015) argues that this occurs through the use of memory as it is an engine for return for those in the diaspora, a way to envision and seek security in the homeland, as well as a way to design, imagine and reconstruct shattered societies. According to Selgado of Illumi*Native*, new healthy narratives that utilize shifting platforms include media, pop culture and education (Fiske, 2020).

Discussion

This study goes beyond documenting the magnitude and nature of the impacts of COVID-19 on Indian Country and instead captures the resiliency and strategies used to navigate educational experiences faced particularly by Indigenous students at a south-west minority serving institution. The

stories and interviews analyzed elevate the narratives of activists, organizers and students who experience COVID-19 while struggling to retain their communities and cultural heritage. The findings suggest that it is these cultural assets that are particularly impactful in enhancing the resiliency witnessed amongst Indigenous students. Students who are engaged in the culturally relevant organizing efforts are saying: "Let's show up. Let's show them that we're still here."

These narratives and interviews consider unique issues confronting Indigenous students and the cultural assets used to empower them during the current pandemic. Doing so demonstrates the need on part of administrators to address the disparities head on to ensure an equitable and inclusive educational recovery and future. The salient need for administrators to take the conversations beyond the immediate day-to-day concerns of safety, health and stability and to consider how to engender real difference after the pandemic is under control cannot be overstated. It is incumbent that administrators and educators reconsider conventional educational strategies like funding, pedagogy and practices to address collectively the new and historic needs of Indigenous students. The questions to consider: What does that system look like post COVID? What will it mean to start a new school year? What do these case studies reveal in terms of the future of education?

Knowledge gleaned from this analysis can assist in rebuilding the university system particularly in addressing historic inequities confronting Indigenous students. The conversations should focus on strengthening the nexus between policy decisions and sound knowledge and practice in addressing the new and ongoing issues Indigenous students face.

Administrative leaders are called upon to revisit the structures, paradigms and practices of effective education particularly as it applies to Indigenous students (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward & Malone, 2017). Particularly, educators and academic administrators must critically interrogate the ways that educational frameworks and approaches preserve and extend systemic inequities related to academic outcomes for Indigenous students.

The dominant college experience, as it is structured, appears to pose obstacles to maintaining cultural continuity, distances students from elders, in turn undermining the transmission of cultural knowledge and grounding them in their communities for which they find strength and resiliency. The typical college experience appears to further render Indigenous students invisible, as the notion of numbers and representation take precedent over actually hearing, communicating with and engaging students and their communities about their needs and wishes. Presence does not always equal power; i.e. just being in attendance at a college or university is not necessarily empowering in and of itself and yet this is what is at the heart of many educational projects which focus solely on increasing numbers, be it to gain 'minority-serving' status, to increase Indigenous student representation, or Indigenous faculty representation. As this analysis suggests the efforts must go deeper than cosmetic shifts.

One very specific approach is to organize meetings with Indigenous students, faculty and community members to discuss and document concerns, needs, and desires for a rich and successful educational experience. Further it is suggested that educators utilize that information and collectively design programs that enhance cultural connectedness and infuse cultural resources within the overall academic setting.

The findings of this analysis suggest that intentional and diverse forms of cultural and linguistic innovation are key to retaining students and assisting them in reaching successful degree completion. Native youth are more educated than ever in terms of Westernized education and they have more desire to connect to their cultures than ever before (Democracy Now, 2020). Research conducted in Hawai'i by Malia Kana'iaupuni et. al. (2017) suggest that students thrive with culture-based education (CBE), and this is especially the case for Indigenous students. Accordingly, students who are immersed in environments where CBE is intentionally infused in their college experience, have positive socioemotional and other outcomes. Therefore, developing in collaboration with Native communities

and students, unique contextualized CBE programs is highly recommended if genuine commitments are to be upheld to Indigenous students regarding their academic success. "By cultivating culturally vibrancy and affirming learning environments in lieu of "one-size-fits-all" approaches, educators honor assets found in Indigenous knowledge, values and stories as models of vitality and empowerment for all" (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward & Malone, 2017).

Educational progress will come from forward-oriented research and leadership that embraces the cultural advantages of students with diverse experiences. Particularly aspects of community resilience and sustainability must be at the center of student achievement plans for Indigenous students. Traditional Indigenous forms of education must be given serious consideration as conceptual wellsprings for the "new" kinds of educational thought capable of addressing the tremendous challenges of the 21st century" (Cajete, 2010).

The suggested shift in programmatic approaches presented here are about fighting complex structural racism, dismantling the practices embedded within our institutions that are rooted in a settler colonial mindset. This is about how to build power among Indigenous students and among their communities. For instance, one step towards enhancing Indigenous students' resiliency is to develop partnerships with various Indigenous communities, community elders and leaders to work with and hear from those most closely connected to students. Students are turning to traditional knowledge, practices and values to remain strong and healthy in this crisis; we should heed the knowledge gleaned from this analysis to better understand the role it may play in developing a more holistic approach not just to educational success but merging this with spiritual, physical and cultural well-being. "Environmental relationship, myth, visionary traditions, traditional arts, tribal community, and nature-centered spirituality have traditionally formed the foundations of American Indian life for discovering one's true face (character, potential, identity), one's heart (soul, creative self, true passion) and one's foundation (true work, vocation), all of which lead to the expression of a complete life" (Cajete, 1994).

These *magical movement moments*, (so termed by Crystal Echo Hawk) emerging from the crisis are recognized as opportunities rooted in cultural reconnection, which are exciting Native youth and young people. After surviving genocide, violent relocation and attempts at forced assimilation over five centuries, Indigenous nations on this continent are again proving themselves resilient and organized. COVID-19 has made visible how grassroots organizing built on cultural resources have fueled Indigenous students' resolve, determination and resource base as they provide strength and solutions. Subsequently, activists are witnessing more broad inclusion of Native communities in the dialogue and development of strategies to manage the crisis and it is the hope that this be the case in regards to academic program development.

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College During a Pandemic: A Qualitative Exploration of Community College First-Generation Students' Mattering and Persistence Experiences

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Introduction

From inception, the academy has been an enclave for the powerful and the privileged. Historically, American higher education institutions were established to educate young, White men, who perpetuated this advantage by admitting their sons into this exclusive club (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). The establishment of specialty institutions, such as historically Black colleges and universities and all-women's colleges, did provide entrée into higher education for some underrepresented groups. However, until the end of the 20th century admittance into selective colleges and universities for members of marginalized groups, such as targeted ethnic and racial minorities and poor, working-class communities, remained largely skewed in favor of students from privileged backgrounds (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Smith, 2015).

According to Dowd (2003), community colleges have played a democratizing role in American higher education because these public, open-access institutions continue to establish "a primary point of entry into higher education for low-income students, African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, and working adults" (p. 92). Other researchers reported that community colleges' pace of establishment exploded in the 1960s meaning degree-credit enrollment quadrupled from one million to 4.3 million between 1965 and 1980 (Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2003; Labaree, 1997). Cohen and Kisker (2010) posited that by the late 1990s, community colleges solidified their importance in American higher education by becoming "essential players in efforts to elevate low-socioeconomic populations and to connect the K-12 system with institutions of higher education" (p. 446).

Students who have consistently been members of underrepresented groups are first-generation college students (FGS) (Cataldi et al., 2018.). The open-access and affordability of community colleges have attracted FGS to these two-year institutions, which explains why FGS attend community colleges at increasing rates (Cataldi et al., 2018; Center for First-Generation Student Success, 2018). Further, because tertiary degree attainment often becomes a vehicle to social mobility and financial security that otherwise would not exist for poor and minoritized students who lack cultural and social capital, studying measures that help these students persist once they begin college is important. One such component of student success to investigate is how FGS' sense of mattering contributes to their persistence.

Purpose of Study

FGS are sizable, about one-third of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States, and about half of that number attends two-year institutions (Cataldi et al., 2018; Escarcha, 2018). FGS are also one of the fastest growing populations on American college campuses (Center for First-

Generation Student Success, 2018). However, FGS struggle to remain in college to earn a credential (Cataldi et al., 2018), so community college FGS may present substantial retention and persistence concerns. Gibson and Slate (2010) found that when FGS do enroll in community college, they have a higher probability for attrition than their continuing-generation peers. Because of these discoveries, higher education practitioners should employ the most effective measures to mitigate obstacles to FGS' academic success.

This qualitative study investigated how a sense of mattering among FGS at a suburban community college contributed to their persistence as guided by the following research question:

> How does a sense of mattering for first-generation students at a suburban community college in relation to faculty, peers, and other people at the college contribute to the students' persistence?

Through interviews using the College Mattering and Persistence Interview Questions, an instrument created by the researcher, student-participants were asked to share their experiences with mattering to professors, peers, and other college agents through mattering lenses developed by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) and Schlossberg (1989), including attention, importance, appreciation, dependence, and ego-extension. Working with the Office of Institutional Research at the student-participants' home institution, the researcher was given access to potential participants who met the following criteria:

a) Self-identifying as first-generation on their FAFSA form;
b) Being at least eighteen years of age;
c) Completing at least twelve credits at the College,

Ultimately, eleven students were interviewed from July to September 2020 via Zoom since the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had shuttered the physical locations of the FGS' home institution. Presented below are the study's findings, relationship to other research, recommendations for further research, recommendations for practitioners, and concluding thoughts.

Summary of Study

The researcher interviewed, captured, and re-storied the lived experiences of FGS and presented how their mattering in terms of perceived attention, importance, appreciation, dependence, and ego-extension from faculty, peers, and other college agents, contributed to their persistence. The interview questions focused on the students' experiences in seven key areas:

1. Virtual learning since the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. Being first-generation, mattering, and persistence;
3. Others' attention and its impact on mattering and persistence;
4. Feeling important to others and its impact on mattering and persistence;
5. Others' appreciation and its impact on mattering and persistence;
6. Others' dependence and its impact on mattering and persistence;
7. Others' sympathy and pride, and its impact on mattering and persistence.

<div align="center">**Summary of Findings**</div>

College During a Pandemic

This study explored how a set of historically marginalized students acquired and used their sense of mattering with various college agents to impact positively their persistence. Schlossberg (1989) emphasized that mattering is the opposite of marginality, which leads to isolation and mitigates student involvement and engagement. Without involvement and engagement among the college community, students are less likely to develop well either academically or socially (Karp et al., 2010; Tinto, 2017). Further, true engagement is even less possible when instruction has been suddenly and indeterminately forced online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Soria et al., 2020). Current research showed that students, such as FGS, who were already vulnerable to dropping out because of being marginalized and underrepresented, are made even more vulnerable during this chaotic and unprecedented time (Soria et al., 2020). Soria et al. (2020) discovered that FGS experienced more challenges adapting to online instruction compared to continuing-generation students. Some of these obstacles included inadequate spaces and technology for effective virtual learning; responsibilities, such as work and family; difficulty adapting to online instruction; financial hardships; food and shelter insecurity; and mental health issues than their continuing-generation peers.

Some of the student-participants interviewed for this current study admitted to the hardships detailed by Soria et al. (2020), including mental health concerns, shelter insecurity, financial hardships, and caring for family members. One student-participant, Cameron, also spoke about the vulnerabilities of being an African American FGS in the midst of continuing systemic racism and social injustice in America, which reached a crescendo in 2020 along with the Pandemic. Moreover, all students interviewed had some difficulty adjusting to virtual learning, including feeling ignored by and isolated from their professors, peers, and other college agents.

However, most students interviewed adapted successfully to this abrupt change by tapping into their resilience, self-determination, and self-efficacy to overcome these obstacles. Inis and Jordan specifically changed their former in-person behavior by reaching out more to peers for help or to help. Emory and Kelly took the lead during difficult online courses by contacting unresponsive or demanding professors on behalf of other students so that the course calendar was adjusted to meet student needs. Still, Blair and Cameron adopted a very pragmatic and positive attitude about the current twin crises, stating they were confident the College was doing all it could. Fran even discovered through forced online instruction that he is more comfortable with this method of course delivery and will complete the rest of his degree virtually. In all, the student-participants were more than just surviving COVID's challenges to their education; they were flourishing.

Historically, underrepresented students, such as FGS, have been treated in higher education by a deficit model (Green, 2006). However, a study conducted by Alvarado et al. (2017), uncovered that FGS demonstrated more instances of resilience, i.e., being better prepared to deal with stressors in a constantly changing environment, in comparison to their non-first-generation peers. Arguably, the most prevalent stressor for today's FGS has been the forced shift to online learning amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Demonstrating resilience, most students interviewed were adapting relatively well and had adopted a practical attitude toward the situation since they were hard-pressed to change circumstances on their own. Although Inis and Jordan, who self-described as visual learners, did not relish the seclusion of virtual learning, both students did describe altering previous behaviors: Jordan was reaching out more to classmates for help when he was loathed to do so during in person classes, and Inis was making herself more available to classmates who needed her assistance, when pre-Pandemic, she kept mostly to herself. However, the self-described introverted Devon explained that the switch to entirely online

instruction meant that she felt even more isolated from her classmates. Still, Fran said that the switch to online learning helped him to solidify his completing his entire program exclusively online, and he was appreciative of this flexibility.

Being First

Because FGS do not take to their college experience an inherited sense of cultural and social capital that their non-FGS peers do, researchers have argued that FGS are often limited from feeling as if they matter on campus (Katrevich & Arguete, 2017). According to Cataldi et al. (2018), FGS face significant challenges in accessing postsecondary education and then persisting to complete a degree once they do enroll. When the student-participants were asked to describe the challenges of being first in their family to attend college, almost all students interviewed explained the burden of feeling alone in this pursuit and without anyone to turn to for guidance. A majority of students were buoyed that their persistence could be modeled by younger family members. As Blair proclaimed, his being first in his family to earn a college degree will become the defining moment his family's narrative was changed forever. Devon also expressed how excited she was at changing the profile of her family not having any college graduates, a change that has taken generations to complete. For most students interviewed, surviving being first by persisting motivated and inspired them to continue in college.

Mattering: Attention

All student-participants agreed that professors' attention was impactful on their mattering, and most students agreed that when professors paid more attention to them, the students excelled in those courses, making them eager to excel in others. According to Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), even negative attention from authority figures can have positive effects on a person's behavior. Several students, including Blair, Fran, Harley, and Kelly, described how tough love from some professors, manifested as strict adherence to deadlines and instructions, motivated them to excel after earning a failing grade. Kelly described how he was most proud of earning a perfect score on a final project after failing a previous assignment because his submission was one minute late.

Regarding peers' attention contributing to mattering and persistence, most students agreed that, although pleasant, peers' attention was not required for these students to complete their degrees. Moreover, other viewpoints were expressed, from Kelly's lamenting a community college's transient environment inhibiting friendships, to Inis's gratitude at not being distracted by peers' attention. Devon and Jordan admitted that their introverted natures made their connecting with others difficult, so they did not miss others' attention. Alex and Emory were so focused on their pursuit to complete their degrees that others' attention was unnecessary and unnoticed. Save for a few comments about advisors, the attention of no other person at the College impacted these students, and they did not seem concerned about this perceived lack of attention.

Mattering: Importance

Schlossberg, et al. (1989) described the importance aspect of mattering as the belief that others care about what one thinks, wants, and says. Like attention, when students perceived that their professors found them important, the students felt a stronger sense of mattering, which contributed positively to their wanting to do well in particular courses and in college in general. Most students explained that professors treating their students as important was integral to professors' jobs. Gale and Fran commented that any professor who did not consider students important should find another line of work. Also, Kelly expressed feeling important to professors when the professors held high expectations of students, treating them by an asset, not deficit, model. The importance of peers and any other College agent elicited similar responses as attention did. Feeling important to one's peers can

make for a more pleasant experience, but the FGS interviewed claimed feeling important or unimportant to peers did not hinder their persistence.

Mattering: Appreciation

According to Schlossberg et al. (1989), when an individual's efforts are deemed appreciated by others, the individual perceives a sense of mattering, which can positively impact task completion, such as earning a college credential. Much like the other aspects of mattering, the students interviewed discussed feeling their professors' appreciation in positive terms and as motivating their wanting to succeed in college. Alex, Blair, Emory, and Inis noted that the professors' appreciation was most manifested when these students took a leadership role by engaging during in-class discussion when other students remained silent. This appreciation, therefore, was extended from classmates, who were relieved that the burden of having to contribute during in-class discussions was lifted from them. Regarding feeling the appreciation of anyone else at the College, again, save some mention of advisors, no other College agent was mentioned.

Mattering: Dependence

Dependence as an aspect of mattering was described by the student-participants in almost exclusively negative terms when they spoke about how professors and their peers relied on them. Fran and Jordan described in negative terms professors depending on students to complete an exorbitant amount of work, to lead a discussion, or to learn independently difficult concepts. Additionally, almost all students complained about the weight of having peers depend on them for everything from a pencil to notes to relationship advice. There was not much mention of the dependence of others at the College except Blair and Harley, who were involved in a work-study program and volunteering at a College facility. However, all students agreed that the weight of others' dependence was not enough to make them drop out of college.

Mattering: Ego-extension

The final aspect of mattering the students discussed was ego-extension — when an individual feels others' pride for accomplishments and sympathy for failures (Schlossberg et al., 1989). When the student-participants discussed feeling sympathy from their professors, Inis recounted the value of teachers' understanding during times of personal tragedies as integral to Inis remaining in school. However, Devon and Jordan described how sympathy from a professor made them uncomfortable. Also, most students spoke about sympathy from peers in similar terms; that is, sympathy from peers made the student-participants even more emotional, so students were reticent about sharing personal information. Jordan even explained he feared being judged by his peers. Regarding the sympathy from anyone else at the College, Harley and Inis described the relief from anxiety about course schedules and financial aid that advisors' sympathy gave them.

The role of feeling others' pride in connection to mattering contributed even less to the students' persistence. Alex, Emory, and Fran blatantly commented that feeling a professor's pride did not impact their staying in school. Devon and Gale claimed that they have never felt their professors' pride, but Cameron did explain that she relished when her professors were proud of her achievements. Inis extended this sentiment by commenting that she wished more professors would demonstrate pride for their students' achievements, but Inis also remarked that students need to recognize their achievements without the flattery of others. Kelly explained the bonding nature of feeling pride for and with peers, particularly during group projects. Students described this sense of mutual pride as building "camaraderie," "community," and "family" among their peers, which increased their wanting to perform well in those courses.

Mattering to Professors. Tinto (1975) first found and then Tinto (2017) later re-emphasized that college students were more likely to persist if they engaged academically and socially with the institution. Karp et al. (2010) applied Tinto's theory to community college students to discover that community college students, too, were more likely to persist when they were more connected academically and socially to their school. One form of this connection and engagement is cultivating a sense of mattering with professors and peers. Other researchers, who focused on first-generation community college students, indicated that when students felt a sense of mattering among the college community, these students were more likely to persist toward completion (Gibson & Slate, 2010; Holmes & Slate, 2017; Karp et al., 2010).

The FGS interviewed for this study affirmed that mattering to professors contributed to persistence. Students stated knowing they matter to their professors because professors were "helpful," "attentive," and "understanding" when necessary. Cameron explained feeling nervous about returning to school as an older student but described mattering to her professors putting her at ease: "I do feel like I matter to them because they listen to any questions; they are helpful. They don't brush me off." Fran framed how he felt he mattered to professors in terms of the professors' accessibility and respect for students: "Being able to show up every day, ask questions, do the work on time, and have [professors] recognize that you respect them, and then they reflect that back on you, it makes the classes so much easier. When I matter to my professors, it makes me do better, honestly." Blair and Harley noted that connecting with professors was always beneficial to their doing well in specific courses and in college in general; however, both students also explained the students bear some of the responsibility for making this connection. Harley said, "If you are having a conversation with [a professor], say, "I didn't understand this," and [the professor] will help you. Just having a conversation with them, getting along with them as a person, not just as a teacher/student, and having a conversation with them surpasses the class."

+Self-determination. According to Deci and Ryan (2012), individuals' self-determination promotes a positive self-identity, producing autonomy, motivation, and well-being. Self-determination can also broaden academic and social interactions because students internalize and integrate diverse interactions to inspire goal attainment (Hove, 2017). A particular manifestation of students' self-determination is being focused on career goals (Gore, Jr., 2006; Tinto, 2017). The students interviewed for this study were goal-oriented and purposeful in their pursuit to earn their college degree. Alex, Blair, Cameron, Devon, Gale, and Inis spoke about specific career goals that pushed them to persist. These students referred to future careers, which were as varied as interior designer, pastry chef, family counselor, and foreign language teacher, with the word "passion." As Checkoway (2018) explained, "because they are the first in their families and have been forced to deal with inequalities of the social structure, they have the expertise which is lacking higher-income legacy students who come from families that have attended college for years" (p. 73). Even though legacy students may take for granted earning a college degree, their FGS counterparts regard viscerally the privilege of higher education and its ability to provide social mobility and financial security, so these students are determined not to abandon the pursuit.

Resilience. This study also confirmed the discoveries of prior research on FGS and resilience. Alvarado et al. (2017) showed that FGS must adapt academically and socially to their new institution in ways that their continuing-generation peers do not, such as navigating conflict between the cultures of home and college. When FGS employ resilience to bridge this divide, their transition into college is smoother, and they are more likely to persist and complete. According to Alvarado et al. (2017),

"Resilience also increases the likelihood of success despite adversity and is important in predicting academic persistence and mental health" (p. 4). Specific examples of the student-participants' resilience were evident in their not letting social and economic crises like the Pandemic, threat of racism, and homelessness interrupt their studies. Moreover, several students mentioned battling mental health issues while pursuing their degrees, along with caring for family members. Still, other students interviewed discussed how emotional challenges, such as their parents' addiction and divorce and being estranged from parents, have not deterred their pursuits.

Self-efficacy.   Self-efficacy toward education is an instrumental cognitive resource that FGS can use to persist in their studies (Bandura, 1997; Majer, 2009). The student-participants in this study did demonstrate academic self-efficacy by behaving in ways to reach desired goals, such as venturing outside of their comfort zone to complete tasks to earn a college degree. Jordan, who at first found difficult pursuing his studies online because of his introverted nature, began communicating more with professors to express frustration and to ask for help. Jordan also reached out more to peers for assistance even though Jordan admitted in the past, his "MO" had always been not to engage others. Also, Kelly, in the midst of a challenging, forced online, engineering program, discussed taking the reins in courses by organizing virtual study groups and group labs. Jordan and Kelly's actions also displayed their sense of mattering by commanding the attention, importance, and dependence of others. In this way, these students also demonstrated that academic self-efficacy correlated with mattering and persistence.

Burden of Being First.   Findings from this study confirmed past research that due to a lack of social capital, FGS experience many challenges transitioning and persisting in college (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004). Having never attended college, the parents of student-participants could not assist well their children in this transition, which proved challenging to most students interviewed. As a result, sentiments, such as having to learn everything on their own, were expressed by most interviewees. When Cameron was asked to describe what was most challenging about being a first-generation student, she replied: "Not having guidance on what to expect or what to do or how things are going to be when you go to college. You're really just learning everything on your own."

However, most students interviewed accepted this burden of being first with enthusiasm for their younger family members. Cameron described eagerly offering advice to her nephew when he embarked on his first college semester. Devon and Emory described preparing for the day they will help their children with college because of what the first-generation college journey has taught Devon and Emory. This desire to change the narrative by normalizing a college education for future generations is consistent with past research that discovered second-generation college students received more support and encouragement from family to pursue a college degree than their FGS counterparts (York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991).

Recommendations for Further Research

Current research on how FGS' sense of mattering at college and how this mattering contributes to the students' persistence should be expanded. As Whitley et al. (2018) made clear, more scholarship about FGS is needed to understand their particular needs, so institutions can implement practices that best serve FGS. For example, D'Amico and Dika (2013) found that FGS struggled to transition into higher education from high school. In this study, Gale and Kelly characterized a main difficulty of transitioning to college was being uncertain about a major. When college students are unclear about which program to choose, they may enroll in unnecessary courses, which can lead to students' dropping out. Therefore, more research can determine the results of community colleges partnering with high

schools to ensure FGS transition into college with a more concrete plan about their prospective major. Additionally, more research should be conducted to determine what effects community college administrators' developing partnerships with local businesses and industries to discover the career opportunities for FGS, particularly since a majority of community college students enter the workforce of the community where the college is located (Bahr & Gross, 2016).

In addition, more research should uncover the high impact practices (HIP) most effective in assisting FGS. According to Kuh (2008), HIP include "first-year experiences that emphasize critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies" (p. 3). First-year experiences and learning communities can also help FGS cultivate a stronger sense of mattering with professors and peers, help these students navigate the otherwise foreign climate of a college campus, and instill confidence about pursuing their degree.

A final recommendation for further research is investigating how FGS can benefit from intrusive advising to strengthen their mattering and persistence. Donaldson et al, (2016) discovered that community college students benefited from intrusive advising to thwart inertia and to motivate persistence and completion. Kelly complained that advisors at the College were often overwhelmed because their department was under-staffed and recounted a time he had to wait two hours to meet with an advisor. Therefore, more research is needed to show how intrusive advising can increase FGS' academic success so that institutions devote more resources to this practice.

Recommendations for Practice

Tinto's (2017) revisited theory on student retention emphasized: "Student motivation to persist is also shaped by student perceptions of the value of what they are being asked to learn" (p. 5). Therefore, faculty play an immense role in helping vulnerable FGS to persist. Professors should present material that is relevant to FGS' concerns and directly applicable to their future endeavors. As Tinto (2017) noted, student interest is a "key driver" of student engagement (p. 6). Faculty can ensure that their courses provide opportunities for social integration so that students can build relationships with peers to increase mattering and persistence. FGS cohorts can motivate students from similar backgrounds to empower each other through academic pursuits. According to Soria, et al. (2020), peer to peer relationships are integral to FGS' sense of mattering and persistence during the COVID-19 crisis, so faculty should take every opportunity to help students build these relationships. Some specific methods faculty can employ, particularly in gateway courses, such as first-year English and math courses, are collaborative learning assignments, matching students so that stronger students can assist other students, and project-based learning from which students can acquire deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges that are functionally applicable in their lives.

Another recommendation for practice is FGS connecting with mentors who can relate directly with the FGS' specific challenges. Mentors should assist FGS holistically, considering all aspects of the students' lives to help them persist and complete. Faculty can serve as student mentors, working in tandem on research or capstone projects. FGS who are further along in their studies can also serve as mentors, and this experience can help cultivate the leadership qualities of more senior peer FGS. According to Kuh (2008): "The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions" (p. 4). The dedication of a mentor can increase the student's mattering, which can increase the student's persistence.

Finally, practitioners should seek out FGS and ensure these students are acculturating well into the college community. These measures may include professors carving out time to meet with FGS

individually to normalize the professor-student relationship so that FGS are not reticent about reaching out for help. Also, FGS groups, such as Alpha Alpha Alpha, a national honor society for FGS, should be organized on campus to instill confidence, encourage peer relationships, promote volunteerism and community outreach, and celebrate the students' achievements, all of which can increase their commitment to completing their degrees.

Conclusion

This qualitative research study investigated how community college FGS, a historically minoritized demographic, gained and used a sense of mattering with professors, peers, and other people at the college to persist. Specifically, this research was conducted during the chaos and uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the systemic racial inequities that continue to besiege America at large and American higher education in particular. Eleven community college FGS were interviewed, and the researcher recorded and re-storied their lived experiences. As a result, four overarching themes emerged: the student-participants' resilience, self-determination, self-efficacy, and burden of being first informing their persistence. As the FGS in this study made clear, they are filled with the characteristics necessary to be successful in college and beyond. These students are resilient, determined, goal-oriented, and motivated by being first in their families, so they take seriously this responsibility to earn a college degree.

As Tinto (2017) and Yosso (2005) argued, if institutions make the campus accessible and welcoming to all students and if practitioners view historically underrepresented college students, such as FGS, as possessing inherent cultural wealth due to their unique backgrounds and families, higher education practitioners can build upon this wealth rather than remediate it. When professors are approachable, accessible, and respectful of all students, professors recognize all students as inherently capable and valuable. This recognition is particularly necessary during a public health crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the accepted culture of systemic racism that beleaguers the United States. Community colleges' open access mission mitigates the equity gap in only a limited fashion. Therefore, FGS, who enter the academy more through these two-year institutions, must be treated by an asset model once they enter because they do possess the characteristics of high-achieving students as this study discovered.

FGS continue to be one of the fastest growing demographics on college campuses, and these students access higher education through community colleges more frequently than through other institutions (Bahr & Gross, 2016; Cataldi et al., 2018; Center for First-Generation Student Success, 2018). Through in-depth interviews, the researcher has re-storied the lived experiences of eleven successful, first-generation community college students so that institutions, practitioners, and other FGS can benefit from these experiences.

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Using Disparate Impact Analysis to Develop Anti-Racist Policies: An Application to Coronavirus Liability Waivers

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Introduction

The summer of 2020 created a compound crisis for many colleges and universities. The police killing of George Floyd (Hill, 2020) led many students to connect perceptions of systematic racism in policing and the justice system to their experiences in higher education (Thomason, 2020). Some recognized that nominally race-neutral academic policies such as admissions, financial aid, scholarships, probation, and registration priority disparately affect Black students. As concerns over racism rose, the deadly coronavirus raged across the country. Campuses deciding whether to reopen in fall 2020 had to weigh public health, finance, and pedagogical concerns. To reduce the potential impact of coronavirus lawsuits, some institutions proposed requiring students to sign coronavirus liability waivers as a condition of participation in campus activities (Kafka, 2020). We analyze coronavirus liability waivers to determine if a nominally race-neutral policy could have a disparate impact on Black students and therefore contribute to systematic racism.

Systematic Racism in Higher Education

The landmark Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896) decision established the doctrine of separate but equal that allowed for racially segregated public accommodations (including education) in the United States. While separate, segregated education for black students was never equal, leading to a series of groundbreaking court decisions in the mid-twentieth century that ended segregation and created optimism that educational equity could be obtained in the United States. In Sweatt v. Painter, 339 U.S. 629 (1950), the Supreme Court agreed with the plaintiff that ruled that the University of Texas's hastily created law school for Black students did not provide equal educational opportunities and required the university to integrate its law school. Four years later, the Supreme Court rejected the separate but equal educational doctrine completely, ruling in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), that Topeka had to open its previously all-white schools to black students. The Brown v. Board of Education decision was enhanced when Congress passed, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title IX of that act provided a regulatory framework intended to improve equal educational opportunity in the United States.

In Bob Jones University v. United States, 461 U.S. 574 (1983), the Supreme Court ruled that universities that the IRS could revoke tax exempt status for universities that maintained racially discriminatory policies. Bob Jones University prohibited black students altogether until 1971, and subsequently allowed only married Black students to attend because of a theological position that opposed interracial dating. The court decided that the university could be denied an IRS income tax

exemption unless it ended its prohibition of the enrollment of unmarried Black students. The University ended its discriminatory practices in 2000 but did not regain its tax-exempt status until 2017.

The 2020 Indicators of Higher Education Equity provides evidence that over fifty years after segregation ended, colleges and universities are failing to provide equal access to and opportunities for higher education for Black students. For example, the Indicators (p. 48) show that non-whites are persistently under-enrolled in higher education. According to the report, "(a)mong dependent 18-to-24-year-old individuals who are not enrolled in high school, Cohort College Participation Rates in 2018 were 7 percentage points higher for Whites than for Blacks, and 7 percentage points higher for Whites than for Hispanics. In 1976, college participation rates were 8 percentage points higher for White high school students than for Blacks and 7 percentage points higher than for Hispanics."

Since intentional discrimination has been made illegal and has mostly disappeared from higher education, why does racial inequality persist at such high levels? Many analysts blame persistent underperformance in higher education on systems and policies that unintentionally discriminate against Black students. Carmichael (1992) refers to this type of discrimination as institutional racism, but it is now more commonly referred to as systematic racism. This form of systematic racism is not the result of hate crimes or segregation. Instead, disparities in racial outcomes are the result of deeply ingrained cultural biases. Even if polices that overtly discriminate were eliminated, the climate on many campuses remains hostile for non-white students. Hurtado (1992) and Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that college racial conflict increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s with little sign of abatement in the 2000s. Unfortunately, the end of separate but equal segregation failed to bring an end to either intentional or unintentional racial discrimination. Racial differences remain among almost every aspect of college success.

Libassi (2018) finds that there are significant racial differences among college students along almost every dimension of higher education. Libassi finds that Black and Hispanic students are more likely to attend for-profit colleges and community colleges which tend to have lower financial resources per student. Libassi also finds that Black and Hispanic students are much less likely than white students to earn Bachelors' degrees and more likely to earn certificates, and much less likely to major in science, technology, or mathematics (STEM). Shapiro et al (2018) find that Black and Hispanic students are much less likely to complete their college degrees and calculate that if Black and Hispanic graduation rates were equal to graduation rates of white students, the country would produce close to one million more college graduates over a three–year time span. Miller (2020) discusses data that shows that even before the pandemic, enrollment of Black students was falling faster than other ethnic groups and suggests that enrollment levels of Black students may be approaching a critically low level.

Moreover, the data for these studies predate the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020; preliminary evidence suggests that COVID-19 has significantly exasperated racial differences in college enrollment. St. Amour (2020) reports that freshman enrollment of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students fell nearly 30 percent at community colleges and 19-23% across all colleges and universities between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.

While no one factor can completely explain the racial differences in educational access, student and education finances are an important part of the picture. In the next section, we discuss ways in which educational budgets are being impacted by COVID-19.

Financial Impact of Coronavirus on Colleges and Universities
The financial strains affecting many colleges and universities were well-established before the coronavirus pandemic of 2020. Carlson (2020) reports that the pandemic has greatly increased the financial crisis facing many higher education institutions. Carlson finds that half of private colleges increased tuition discounts above 50%, one quarter of institutions raised discounts above 62% to sustain

enrollments, and one raised tuition discounts to 78%. Such heavy tuition discounting hurts bottom-line revenues, creating net income losses at many institutions. Carlson also reports that larger institutions faced dramatic drops in income related to sports, particularly NCAA football. Carlson describes the challenges facing the University of Scranton as an example of the challenges facing moderate-sized institutions. Scranton lost an estimated $12-14 million in tuition revenue from enrollment declines and tuition discounting and spent over $2 million on coronavirus testing to allow students to stay on campus. If the university had gone remote-only and university-owned dormitories and apartments were closed, it would have lost an additional estimated $1 million per week in residence revenue.

Yuen (2021) reports that community colleges are among the worst impacted by COVID-19. Before the pandemic, Yuen found that community colleges received an average of $8,800 per student, $8,800 less than the $17,600 average revenue per student at four-year colleges and universities. For the perennially underfunded community colleges, Yuen reports that the compound crisis makes things even worse and estimates that the sector will experience a collective deficit of $78 billion. Gardner (2020) reports that while majority white suburban community colleges saw modest enrollment gains, urban institutions that have non-white majorities saw sizable enrollment drops. Further, government funding to community colleges is likely to be cut further as a budget-balancing action by state and local governments who face their own revenue shortfalls combined with rising costs.

Four-year state-supported institutions are unlikely to fare much better, especially those who cater to low income and non-white students. Richtel and Blesener (2020) write in the New York Times about Indiana University of Pennsylvania to illustrate the existential threat coronavirus poses to many higher education institutions. As a working-class institution, the university struggled financially before the pandemic. Richtel and Blesener list expensive infrastructure investments, steep enrollment declines caused by demographic changes, and reduced state support as the chief causes of the pre-pandemic declines. The university faced a $1 million deficit in 2019. With increased costs and decreased enrollment caused by coronavirus, the university's deficit ballooned to an estimated $48 million from its $1.6 billion budget in 2020. To control the budget, the university announced a decision to close or combine six colleges and eliminate 128 faculty members, about 15% of the college's 850 faculty.

In sum, the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated existing financial challenges for almost every sector of higher education. Many institutions faced budget shortfalls before the pandemic, and for almost all of them, the deficits will grow. Institutions may be forced to reduce budgets by eliminating faculty and staff, and some institutions are unlikely to survive. Against this backdrop, institutions face a dilemma. Keeping students away from campus in remote learning situations adds to deficits. Bringing them to campus creates the risk of transmission of coronavirus, and with that the concomitant risk of costly legal liability. In the next section, we discuss coronavirus liability for colleges and universities.

Coronavirus Legal Liability

The prospect of coronavirus negligence lawsuits is an insidious threat faced by educational institutions. Campus finances often depend on the physical presence of students on campus, but close physical contact raises the chance of on-campus spread of illness, and subsequent litigation. An institution found to be negligent in its handling of the illness could face substantial losses of capital and credibility, pushing fragile institutions toward failure. By shifting the financial burden of coronavirus from the institution to the student, waivers might give institutions a margin for error in preventing and managing the harm caused by a still poorly understood and unpredictable disease.

Bryer (2020) argues that colleges and universities should be shielded from legal liability associated with coronavirus by state or federal statute. He reports that there were 270 coronavirus lawsuits against

colleges and universities as of November 2020, of which 54 were related to negligence, personal injury, or similar claims. He further states that these types of cases are likely to attract class-action lawsuits, which are particularly expensive to litigate. Bryer argues that it is likely that colleges and universities would prevail in court, but the high cost of potential litigation alone could create undue financial hardships for institutions.

Liability Waivers

A liability waiver is a legal document that requires a participant to acknowledge and assume the risks associated with an activity. People frequently sign liability waivers with short notice and little opportunity to review with counsel. Because liability waivers subject potential plaintiffs to significant power and information disadvantages, some jurisdictions treat them as unenforceable contracts. In other jurisdictions, the liability waiver serves as evidence that the participant willingly and with forethought assumed the risk of an activity, shifting most liability risk from the service provider to the participant.   Enforceable liability waivers can discourage lawsuits and prevent judgements for wrongful death, injury, or illness from ordinary negligence (carelessness). In jurisdictions where they are enforced, an injured plaintiff who signed a liability waiver must demonstrate that the defendant committed gross negligence, meaning willful or reckless disregard for life, health, or safety.

While many higher education institutions have proposed or instituted COVID liability waivers, Feldman (2020) and others have written extensively about concerns that colleges and universities are abusing their power by requiring students to sign coronavirus liability waivers before becoming residential students or attending in-person classes. (See her commentary at Berman, 2020; Cherney, 2020; Simon, 2020; and Sovern, 2020). Feldman writes: "Schools are preparing to dodge even well-founded lawsuits — to assert that, in essence, students and employees who come to campuses thereby OK carelessness on the part of schools. The technical term for this sort of defense is 'primary assumption of risk.'"

Clark et al. (2020) describes coronavirus liability waivers from the perspective of enforceability, and caution that institutions may err if they rely too heavily on the waivers without careful legal review. They point out that there is considerable variability from state to state in terms of liability waiver enforcement.   While each state's law is unique, Clark et al divides states into three general categories. Louisiana, Montana, and Virginia disallow liability waivers entirely.   Other states, such as New York, California, and Pennsylvania, have moderately strict enforceability requirements, with provisions that do not contravene public policy, demand unambiguous and specific language, and avoid coercion. Clark et al. also describes a third group of states that is quite lenient in accepting liability waivers.

In those states that allow liability waivers, there is variation in the extent to which the waiver can protect the institution from legal action. While most states allow waivers to protect against ordinary negligence such as those caused by unforeseeable accidents, few if any states will enforce waivers that protect a business against gross negligence, reckless conduct, willful/wanton conduct, or intentional acts. In Pruitt v. Strong Style Fitness (2011), Pruitt was injured when an exercise machine unexpectedly dropped 350 pounds of weights on his knee. He had signed a liability waiver releasing Strong Style Fitness from liability. In ruling that the waiver was enforceable, the Ohio court said that a liability waiver clause could be found to be ineffective only if the party failed to exercise care, was willful or wanton in its misconduct, ignored public policy concerns, was unconscionable, or if the waiver was written in ways that are vague and ambiguous. They found that none of these exceptions applied in this case and ruled that his liability waiver prevented any recovery for Pruitt following the injury. In another gym injury case (Hinkal v. Pardoe, 133 A.3d 738, 746 (Pa. Super. Ct. 2016)), Hinkal alleged that she received a ruptured disk when gym trainer Pardoe allowed her to lift more weight than she was prepared to lift. She had signed a gym membership contract with a liability waiver printed on the back.

The court found a liability waiver printed on the back of a signed gym membership to be enforceable, distinguishing it from a case in which the court held that a liability waiver printed on the back of an unsigned ski lift ticket was unenforceable. The court held that the fact that the Hinkal chose not to read the entire document before she signed it did not make it unenforceable.

In summary, the legal enforceability of liability requirements varies considerably by state. In states where they are enforced, liability waivers cannot be implicit and must be signed as part of a conscious contract in most cases. They cannot be contrary to public policy. In the next section, we consider the desirability of this policy, and do not protect the agent against reckless behavior.

Distinguishing Disparate Treatment from Disparate Impact

The law provides two theories plaintiffs may assert in alleging unlawful discrimination: disparate treatment and disparate impact. Disparate treatment claims are asserted when a defendant "treats some people less favorably than others because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." See Teamsters v. United States, 431 U.S. 324, 335 (1977). Thus, an employer's decision to refrain from hiring women because they may become pregnant would be a clear disparate treatment case. By contrast, disparate impact claims involve facially neutral policies that "are facially neutral in their treatment of different groups but that in fact fall more harshly on one group than another and cannot be justified by business necessity." See, again, Teamsters v. United States, 431 U.S. 324, 335-336 (1977). Suppose an employer posts a job opportunity that requires all applicants to carry a certain weight up a flight of stairs within a specified time-period to proceed with the application process. This policy appears facially neutral with regard to gender. Yet, the application of this policy might disqualify a greater percentage of females than males from an employment opportunity. A university's attempt to include this requirement for faculty positions would certainly violate disparate impact. However, the same policy might survive a disparate impact claim if the employer was a fire department that could justify the policy as a business necessity.

Disparate Impact Analysis

The goal of this paper is to use coronavirus liability waivers as a vehicle to demonstrate how higher education administrators can analyze nominally race-neutral policies in light of concerns over their potential disparate impact on minority populations. A review of secondary data will demonstrate that such waivers have a disparate impact on Black students. This research will demonstrate that coronavirus liability waivers have a disparate impact on Black students, and therefore contribute to systematic racism.

The seminal case in disparate impact is Griggs v. Duke Power Co., 401 U.S. 424 (1971). Griggs was employed by Duke Power as a low wage laborer. To move into a higher paying job, Duke Power required either Griggs to have a high school diploma or to pass a skills test. Griggs argued that both requirements, while ostensibly race-neutral, had the inadvertent impact of discrimination against Black applicants. The court observed that whites in North Carolina were twice as likely to have graduated from high school, and ten times more likely to obtain the required score on the skills-based test. The court required employers to prove that the diploma and the tests were directly related to employment outcomes before they could require such employment barriers.

The Supreme Court shifted its burden of proof from employers to employees in Wards Cove Packing Co. v. Atonio, 490 U.S. 642 (1989). Atonio and other non-White employees, mostly Alaska natives and Filipinos, argued that they were overrepresented relative to their population in cannery labor jobs, but underrepresented in management and office jobs. The Supreme Court ruled that the comparison of population size alone was incorrect, and that the employees must base their statistics on the percentages of qualified applicants in each of the population groups. The court further directed the

court to which the case was remanded to require the employer to make a business case for the employment qualification if the revised statistics based on qualified applicants only demonstrated disparate impact. The Wards Cove decision created a paradox in which an employment test could be found to be inadmissible only if there are racial differences in hiring among those who pass the test. Congress passed the Civil rights Act of 1991 that reinstated the Griggs v. Duke Power standard in which all applicants, not just qualified applicants, are used to establish the validity of an employment test.

In Ricci v. DeStefano, 557 U.S. 557 (2009), the Supreme Court placed a significant limit on the use of disparate impact analysis. The city established a test for promotion that showed significant racial variation in pass rate. In the round of exams under review, approximately 60% of whites and fewer than 40% of blacks and Hispanics passed the test. The city, fearing a Title VII disparate impact suit by the minority candidates, decided to make no promotions based on the test results. Twenty white and one Hispanic firefighter sued the city of New Haven, Connecticut after being denied promotions they had qualified for under the city's discarded testing regime. Justice Kennedy, arguing for the majority, wrote that rejecting a validated test because it eliminated Black candidates constituted racial discrimination against the white candidates. Justice Ginsberg, writing for the minority, argued that the majority's decision ended disparate impact. We take the middle ground in our analysis. We believe that the court did not reject disparate impact analysis altogether. Instead, we believe that the court argued that disparate impact must be applied with caution. We interpret the court's decision to mean that employers (and educators) may consider the unintended racial consequences of their policies before they are implemented, but once policies have been reviewed and approved as race-neutral, they cannot be reversed midstream just because they have an undesirable outcome.

There are, admittedly, distinctions in the application of discrimination laws in employment and educational settings, beginning with the underlying federal legislation that seeks to eradicate discrimination in the workplace and in education. Many of the seminal cases involving disparate treatment and disparate involve employees suing employers under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in the workplace. Lawsuits alleging discrimination in the educational context arise under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Applying Disparate Impact Analysis to the Education Setting

While the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the use of disparate impact in Griggs v. Duke Power, subsequent cases eroded the impact. Thus, Congress eventually passed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which amended Title VII to clarify that disparate impact claims were permissible. Title VI governing education has not been similarly amended. In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court has explicitly stated that Title VI prohibits private party lawsuits based on disparate impact. See Alexander v. Sandoval, 532 U.S. 275 (2001). However, the absence of a private right of action does not give universities the right to ignore disparate impact claims. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, commonly known as FERPA, protects the privacy of student records. No private right of action exists under FERPA, yet universities go to great lengths to honor student privacy rights. The potential penalty for FERPA violations is the loss of federal funding, which serves as an adequate deterrent. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education has implemented regulations that forbid federally funded entities from using "criteria or methods of administration which have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination." See 34 C.F.R § 100.3(2). Thus, while the Supreme Court has closed the door on a private right of action under Title VI, the possibility of losing federal funding should motivate colleges and universities to refrain from creating policies that yield disparate impact, just as these colleges are motivated to refrain from violating student privacy rights.

Braceras (2002) opposes extending disparate impact analysis into the educational setting, claiming that since many different academic performance tests yield similar results. She argues that since Black and Hispanic students underperform on more than one test, it is acceptable to utilize these tests in educational settings. We explicitly disagree with this logic since it seems plausible that most if not all standardized tests suffer from similar biases against non-white students.

Perez (2004) proposes that colleges and universities adopt disparate analysis in admission decisions. He points out that while disparate impact analysis is a well-established principle in Title VII employment law, it has never been adopted as part of Title IV education law. He argues that many of the contentious issues surrounding race and college admissions could be mediated more successfully if higher education adopted the Title VII disparate analysis standard.

Perez proposes that colleges should use the same analysis as Griggs v. Duke Power (1971) in making admissions decisions. He argues that college admissions decisions should be subject to the same requirements as Griggs: colleges should be required to prove that college admissions that negatively impact protected category applicants must be directly related to college performance.

As an illustration of Perez's proposal, imagine that a highly selective college required students to achieve a score of at least 750 out of 800 on the SAT Math Section. Reeves (2017) reports the racial breakdown of "qualified" students as follows: Asian (14%), white (2%), Latino (1%) and black (0.7%). The impact ratio of this selection criteria is calculating by dividing selection rates by the selection rate for the highest group, in this case Asian: Asian (100%), white (14%), Latino (7%), and black (5%).

While colleges are not regulated by the four-fifths rule, it is clear that if they were, the imaginary college above would potentially be required to prove that the score on the Math section was highly correlated with college success.

In the analysis that follows, we extend the arguments of Perez from college application to a broader analysis of college policies, not just to admissions. We argue that the ethical burden for college administrators is to show that any proposed college policy that has a racially disparate impact in excess of the four-fifths rule must be directly related to performance outcomes that are mission-centric and can be achieved in no other way.

A Proposed Procedure for Reviewing New Policies

In this section, we develop a proposed method to produce anti-racist policies based upon the disparate impact framework. We begin by describing the framework as it applies to employment decisions. We then expand the framework to apply more broadly to college policy decisions beyond employment and admissions. Finally, we illustrate the framework using the coronavirus liability waiver policies discussed earlier.

In an attempt to codify and quantify the disparate impact rule for employment decisions following the Griggs decision, the Department of Labor developed the "four-fifths rule." The rule is summarized by the following statement: "A selection rate for any race, sex, or ethnic group which is less than four-fifths (4/5) (or eighty percent) of the rate for the group with the highest rate will generally be regarded by the Federal enforcement agencies as evidence of adverse impact, while a greater than four-fifths rate will generally not be regarded by Federal enforcement agencies as evidence of adverse impact." (Section 1607.4.D. Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedure (1978); 43 FR __ (August 25, 1978).) In practice the employment rule works as follows. Suppose that a selection method resulted in 40 of 100 white applicants being selected for a job (0.4 or 40%), but only 20 of 100 black applicants (0.2 or 20%). The 20% rate of the lowest group (Black applicants) is divided into the 40% rate of white applicants selected to yield an impact ratio of 50% (0.2/0.4). Under the Uniform Guidelines, since 50% is less than 80%, the selection procedure would be viewed as evidence of adverse impact. The burden of proof then moves to the employer to prove that the selection criteria is directly and empirically

related to job performance. In the case of Griggs v. Duke Power, the employer was unable to support such a claim. In the case of Ricci v. DeStefano, the court accepted plaintiffs' argument that the city had established that the selection criteria was directly related to job performance, and therefore could not be dismissed after it had been administered.

In this section of the paper, we develop a proposed method for developing anti-racist policies. We provide a method that extends the use of the "four-fifths" rule beyond employment and admissions policies that have previously been developed by others. We propose when data is available, ALL policies be reviewed for their racial impact before they are implemented. Finally, we apply this proposed anti-racist policy rule to Covid-19 liability waivers.

The steps in the method can be summarized as follows:

1. Description: Describe the policy in detail, with particular consideration as to the conditions under which students will be impacted
2. Benefits: Calculate the benefits of the policy to the college mission.
3. Impact: Calculate the impact of the policy on different student groups, especially different racial groups, using the best data available.
4. Rule: Apply the four-fifths rule.
5. Revision: If the four-fifths rule finds that the policy will have a disparate negative impact on a particular racial group, ask if there are ways to revise the policy to eliminate the disparate impact.
6. Goal: Is the goal of the policy central to the mission of the institution? Is the policy the best or only way to achieve the policy goal?

Application of Disparate Analysis Policy to COVID-19 Liability Waivers

To illustrate an application of the method above, we now apply the method to Covid-19 liability waivers.

1. Description: A Covid-19 liability waiver is a legal instrument that transfers liability for contraction of Covid-19 from the institution to the student in cases of ordinary negligence. The college retains liability in cases of gross negligence or reckless behavior. Students who contract Covid-19 on campus, particularly those who are hospitalized or die, will normally forgo the ability to collect damages from the institution except in case of gross negligence of the institution.

2. Benefit: Students can return to residence halls without the college incurring additional liability. The college will reduce potential legal exposure, and perhaps reduce expenditures on prevention.

3. Impact: Table 1 contains data on the relative rates of illness, hospitalizations, and deaths from Covid-19 by racial group. Data demonstrates that there are very large gaps by racial and ethnic groups, and that Black, Hispanic/LatinX, and Native American populations have much higher rates of hospitalizations and deaths. For example, Black Americans are 3.7 times more likely to be hospitalized by Covid-19, and 2.8 times more likely to die than white Americans. This data strongly suggests that a Covid-19 liability waiver would have a more negative impact on Black students compared to white students.

Table 1. *COVID-19 Rates by Race and/or Ethnicity*

Rate ratios compared to White, non-Hispanic persons	American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	Asian, non-Hispanic	Black or African American, non-Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino
Hospitalizations	4	1.2	3.7	4.1
Deaths	2.6	1.1	2.8	2.8

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html#footnote01

4. Rule: Table 2 shows that the Coronavirus liability waiver policy violates the four-fifths rule. Black, Hispanic/LatinX, and Native American students are far more likely than to suffer death, hospitalization, and related financial losses compared to white and Asian students. A Covid-19 policy that strips students of their legal rights violates the four-fifths rule, with the presumption of a disparate racial impact. To calculate the impact ratio, we take the inverse of the rate ratio. For example, the impact ratio for Black student hospitalizations is 1/3.7 or 27%. In other words, Black students receive 27% of the "benefit" of signing a liability waiver compared to white students, since they are 3.7 times more likely to incur hospital expenses for which they waive college liability by signing the waiver. The disparate impact analysis shows that the imposition of a liability waiver requirement violates the four-fifths rule for every non-white group except Asian-Americans. Applying anti-racist policy, the college administrator must ask if a policy which negatively impacts non-white students at such a high rate is the best approach to achieve the policy goal.

Table 2. *Impact Ratios of Legal Liability by Race/Ethnicity*

Rate ratios compared to White, non-Hispanic persons	American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	Asian, non-Hispanic	Black or African American, non-Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino
Impact Ratios				
Hospitalizations	*25%*	83%	*27%*	*24%*
Deaths	*38%*	91%	*36%*	*36%*

Numbers in **bold italics** fall below 80% Impact Ratio threshold and suggest disparate impact of Covid-19 liability waivers. Interpretation: The impact ratio is the inverse of the rate ratio. It measures the disparate negative effect of a COVID-19 policy. For examples, based on hospitalizations, the average Black student would receive only 27% of the "benefit" of a COVID-19 liability waiver that a white non-Hispanic student would receive.
Source: CDC and authors' calculations

5. Revision: Are there ways to revise the rule to eliminate the disparate impact though race-norming or similar adjustments? No. The liability waiver is a blunt instrument for which there are no gradations. Black students, being about 3 times more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19, receive about 33% of the benefit compared to white students who sign the release.

6. Goal: Are there methods of reducing Covid-19 liability risks that are more racially neutral than the liability waivers? Consider policies that demonstrate a commitment to reducing contagion instead, such as universal testing, strictly enforced mask requirements, improved sanitation, and social distancing instead. In addition, the college should review its student insurance requirements to make sure that the cost of hospitalization and death is not borne by the students or their families.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the twin challenge of developing anti-racist policies during a pandemic. The façade of a social fabric that created the illusion of equity and equal opportunity has been frayed if not shredded by groups supporting white supremacy and police actions that kill or injure Black Americans in particular. Covid-19 damages all of society but hospitalizes and kills Black and Hispanic/LatinX populations at disparately high rates. Colleges and universities face financial threats not seen since the Great Depression, many of which are directly related to the impact of systematic racism on the ability of non-white students to afford college education.

Facing these seemingly overwhelming challenges, what steps can an administrator take to create anti-racist policies? This paper provides administrators with a method to analyze policies to reduce their racial impact. Borrowing from Title VII employment law, we propose that administrators find alternatives to policies that violate the "four-fifths" rule, meaning that policies in which minorities succeed at less than 80% of the rate of the most successful groups.

We apply this analysis to coronavirus liability waivers and find that these waivers clearly and egregiously violate anti-racism policies. The waivers are much more damaging to Black, Hispanic/LatinX and Native American populations. Instead of liability waivers, we propose that colleges and universities increase public health policies that reduce the spread of illness on campus.

More broadly, we urge higher education administrators to use the available data to become advocates for anti-racist policies. We provide a useful policy framework to accomplish this goal. We recognize that moving from Clark's (2004) proposal to apply disparate impact to admissions decisions to a proposal that it be applied to all college policies is a radical change with big implications for workload and data analysis. But we equally feel that systemic racisms cannot be overcome without bold measure that ensure that college policies are anti-racist. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze these issues, we call for future research to examine disparate racial impact effects of such policies as minimum GPA requirements for continuing enrollment and financial aid, student behavior and discipline rules, academic misconduct and plagiarism, and similar policies that are likely to perpetuate systematic racism. We believe that colleges and university administrators have an ethical responsibility to consider the unintended impact of these policies. If such policies are found to impact Black, Hispanic/LAtinX, and Native American students negatively, we argue that they should only be implemented if there is no other feasible method to achieve a policy goal.

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The Academic Impact of CARES Act Funding and Peer Mentoring on First Generation Students at the University of Nevada, Reno

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In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic began to wreak havoc on the daily lives of individuals all around the world. College students were asked to make drastic changes to the manner in which they lived and learned mid-spring semester. Students who lived in the residence halls were sent home or asked not to return after spring break. Many students had their work hours cut or lost their jobs on and off-campus. The transition to remote learning brought into sharp focus the inadequacies of technology and the inaccessibility of remote learning opportunities for many students and faculty alike. All of these effects translated into increased costs for students and their families. By March 27th, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law to get financial relief to workers, families, small business, as well as, state, local, and tribal governments. For college students, the CARES Act aimed to provide relief for a broad spectrum of expenses related to food, housing, technology, and even health and childcare.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of CARES Act disbursements on undergraduate student persistence from spring to fall semester at one western, mid-size, Tier 1 research university. Though all students were invited to apply for CARES Act funds, encouragement relied heavily on modes of communication that existed through campus student services and retention programs, that is, on relationships already in place to help first-generation, income-qualified, or historically underrepresented racial minority students navigate the institution. As such, the persistence of first-year students in a first-generation student peer mentoring program was compared to similar students who were not enrolled in a retention program. The program of interest is primarily composed of historically underrepresented student groups, primarily Latinx, though that was an advantage of recruiting first-generation, income-qualified students in Nevada. In this way, the purpose was further refined to compare the impact of the peer mentoring program to direct financial support in a time of crises.

Background

Financial Stress and Student Persistence

No doubt the pandemic magnified financial stressors as well as increased the likelihood and impact of unexpected costs on students and their families. Financial stress disproportionately impacts college students from low-income families, first-generation college students, and underrepresented racial groups (Camelo & Elliott, 2019; Joo, Durband, & Grable, 2008; Phillips, McDaniel, & Croft, 2018). Pre-pandemic, competing financial demands between food, housing, and learning materials, were known to increase student financial anxiety and contemplation to dropout, as well as reduce academic

behaviors that support success, such as time spent studying (Joo, Durband, Grable, 2008; Phillips, McDaniel, & Croft, 2018). Housing insecurity, in particular, negatively impacts a student's ability to attend class and increases the likelihood of withdrawing or failing a class (Silva et al., 2017).

Black and Latinx students both enter college with fewer financial resources, as well as higher subjective financial stress (Britt, et al., 2016). Black college students were found to seek out financial counseling more often than other students (Lim, et al., 2014), which suggests their subjective stress may be greater than other student groups. As for mitigating financial need, employment is the primary way college students manage financial insecurity (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Unfortunately, research shows that as work hours increase above 10 to 15 hours a week the likelihood of dropping out also increases; though work intensity does not appear to have a negative impact on academic outcomes (Neyt, et al., 2017). A recent study found that Hispanic students were most likely to hold intense employment (+20 hours/week) while in college and thereby experience the deleterious effects of employment on their first-year persistence (Choi, 2018).

Peer Mentoring and Student Persistence

Social support is critical to bolstering the sense of belonging of students and supporting their well-being, progress, and persistence. It has long been theorized that the prospect of dropping out is highest among first-year students because they have not fully invested socially or emotionally in their college path (Tinto, 1982). For students from historically underrepresented racial groups, investing in the college experience emotionally is especially difficult at primarily white institutions where they confront stereotypes, microaggressions, and social alienation in their transition and first-year experience (Stryhorn, 2012).

Evidence is growing that peer mentoring programs are a powerful way to help students make meaningful connections and feel like part of a community on campus. Formal mentorship appears to help students become more fully integrated by providing such support (e.g., emotional and social), but also through positive role modeling (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, Nora & Crisp, 2007; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Recently, institutions have attempted to capitalize on the positive impact of faculty-student mentoring towards persistence and performance by creating peer-mentoring programs (Hu & Ma, 2010; Khazanov, 2011; Moschetti, et al., 2018; Shotton & Oosahwe, 2007).

Peer-mentoring promotes integration and sense of belonging (Yomtov et al, 2017), as well as academic outcomes for first-year students (Khazanov, 2011; Zevallos & Wahburn, 2014). Though there is not much research on peer-mentoring effects, frequency of contact appears to be a primary indicator of perceived support by mentees (Holt & Fifer, 2016). Culture appears to mediate the impact of peer-mentoring; for example, Hu and Ma (2010) found that Hispanic mentees turned to their mentors more often than did white mentees. For Native American students specifically, mentees reported their mentors encouraged them to overcome barriers and by extension successfully navigate the institution (Shotton & Oosahwe, 2007).

CARES Act Funds and First in the Pack

A western, mid-size, Tier 1 research university received and distributed just over $7-million dollars to students. By July 2020, all the money was disbursed to a total of 8,244 students. See Appendix A for more details.

First in the Pack: A first-year retention program

First in the Pack (FITP) is an institutionally developed retention program designed to foster the necessary skills and agency to achieve academic, social, and career goals among first-generation and income-qualified students. For the purposes of the First in the Pack, first-generation is defined as neither parent has earned a baccalaureate degree in the United States. In addition, students that qualify for an institutional program entitled the Nevada Guarantee are considered income-qualified for the program. Students need only to meet one of these criteria to participate in First in the Pack. Racially, the program is composed of 72% of students from historically underrepresented student groups, primarily Latinx; this is a benefit of the recruitment of first-generation, low-income students at Nevada, though not a stated recruitment goal.

The cornerstone of the program's intervention model is the upper class, first-generation "Pack Mentors," aka peer mentors who are tasked with building positive and trusting relationships with first-year program participants. Program services are expansive, yet center on developing mentee agency to navigate institutional resources and build support networks. First-year program participants are invited to continue the program into their second/sophomore year, but most students served each year are freshmen.

When CARES Act funding became available, Pack mentors reached out to every program participant directly. Pack mentors called program participants and followed up with an email or text if they did not receive a call back. The mentors assured their mentees that the University had received ample funds and encouraged them to apply for funds. Pack mentors then followed up to inform students that funds were still available, as well as to determine if their mentee had applied for funding.

Outside of the FITP program, students received a communication from the President's Office in April and four additional emails from the Financial Aid Office to alert them to the availability of CARES Act funds. In addition, CARES Act funding information was posted on social media including Instagram and Facebook. Likewise, many services and programs reached out to the students with which they advised or worked. In comparison to other efforts, the FITP program was thought to be much more intrusive in its outreach efforts. As such, this paper compares access to funds for FITP program participants and non-participants alike and examines their persistence to the fall term.

Research Questions

1) Did outreach to the First in the Pack program participants increase access to CARES Act funds for first-generation or low-income students? FITP provided a mechanism to reach out to specific students through an established and personal point of contact - the Pack Mentors. Pack mentors repeatedly contacted program participants by email and phone to encourage them to apply for CARES Act funds. We expected the direct, first-person method of contact increased access to CARES Act funds for first-generation and Pell eligible students in comparison to students who did not get such a direct and personal mode of encouragement.

2) Did receipt of CARES Act funds have an impact on student persistence from spring to fall? We expected higher persistence from students who received CARES Act funds than from those who did not. Even though the funds came at the end of the spring term, we expected CARES Act funding to have a positive impact on persistence over and above academic outcomes for the term. Knowing that academic outcomes, such as academic performance and term completion are the best indicators of persistence, we controlled for enrollment intensity and performance in our analysis.

Method

The first research question was evaluated by comparing access to CARES Act funds between First in the Pack program participants (FITP) and all other first-generation or Pell eligible freshmen and sophomores enrolled in the spring 2020 term. To assess the second research question on the impact to persistence, we controlled for spring term outcomes (GPA and credit load) and examined persistence between FITP participants and a post-hoc comparison group of students most similar to program participants.

Post-hoc Comparison Group

The comparison group was generated post-hoc to assess the second research question. Using logistic regression, the probability that a student would be a member of the FITP program was generated from eight criteria associated with FITP membership.

1. First-generation status was captured from the student's 2019 FASFA. First-generation status was identified for students with parent educational attainment of high school or less (first gen = 1, not first-gen = 0).

2. Pell eligibility was captured from the student's 2019 FASFA. Pell eligible =1, not eligible =0.

3. Family income was also captured from the student's 2019 FASFA. The expected family contribution was used as a proxy for family income (EFC range: $0 - $173,355).

4 – 8. Sex (female =1, male =0), age in years (range: 17 - 37), state residency (in-state =1, out-of-state =0), race or ethnicity (separate dummy variable for: Asian = 1, Latinx = 1, Black = 1, Native American =1, Multi-Ethnic =1, White =0), and high school cumulative GPA (range: 2.203 – 4.000) were all drawn from the student information system directly for the spring term.

The probability that a student would be a member of FITP was used to select students most similar to FITP members from all other enrolled freshmen and sophomores in the spring 2020 term. Selection led to the identification of 521 comparable students. Table 1 summarizes the final composition of the two groups in this study. The results of the logistic regression are available in Appendix B.

Additional Variables for Research Question #2

To assess the second research question as to whether funding had an impact on persistence from spring 2020 to fall 2020 for the FITP and comparison groups, three additional variables were included in an Ordinary Least Squares Regression analysis. The student's credit load at the beginning of the term (BOT), the credits completed for GPA at end of term, and the students term GPA. As such, the final regression included the group membership (FITP = 1, Comparison group = 0), funding status (CARES Act funds = 1, No funds = 0), the group by funds interaction term, and three academic control variables, credit load at beginning of term (range: 0 - 21), credits completed for GPA (range: 0 - 20) and term GPA (range: 0 – 4.000).

Table 1. *Descriptive characteristics for FITP and the ad hoc comparison group*

	FITP (n=249)			Comparison (n=521)		
	Percent	Mean	SD	Percent	Mean	SD
First-generation	60%			74%		
Pell eligibility	61%			77%		
Family Income (EFC)		$8,173	$18,218		$4,383	$9,369
Sex, Female	72%			75%		
Age		18.7	1.33		18.5	.65
State Residency, In-state	94%			98%		
Race or Ethnicity						
Asian	10%			9%		
Black	8%			11%		
Latinx	55%			69%		
Native American	< 1%			< 1%		
Multi-Ethnic	8%			3%		
White	18%			7%		
High School GPA		3.47	.34		3.47	.35

Table 2. *Descriptive characteristics by group on the DV (persistence)*
and academic outcomes for research question 2

	FITP (n=249)			Comparison (n=521)		
	Percent	Mean	SD	Percent	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable						
Spring to Fall Persistence	86%			84%		
Additional enrollment outcomes as Independent Variables						
Credit load for GPA (BOT)		14.8	1.9		14.6	2.3
Credits completed for GPA		12.3	4.4		12.0	4.8
Term GPA		3.10	.97		2.96	1.12

Findings

Research Question #1

Results to assess the first research question are presented in Table 3. As expected, it appears that outreach to FITP students increased access to funds for first-generation students (84% v. 68%) compared to similar students not in the program. In contrast, outreach through the Pack Mentors of the FITP program did not increase access to funds for low-income students identified as Pell eligible (61% v. 75%) compared to similar students not in the program. Likewise, and in contrast to the between-group outcomes for first-generation students, within the FITP program, Pell eligible students appear to have the lowest rate of access (FITP Pell eligible 61% v. FITP not Pell eligible 88%).

Research Question #2

The OLS Regression results to assess the second research question are presented in Table 4. The results reveal that the overall model significantly predicted persistence ($F(6, 751) = 19.044$, $p< .001$), though the amount of variation in persistence explained by the model is very small (R2adj = 13%). As expected, the best and biggest predictor of spring to fall persistence for all students was term GPA (beta = .31, $p<.001$). In addition to term GPA and the focus of this research question, the group by funding interaction term was also significant (beta = -.15, $p<.05$). The significance of the interaction term indicates that persistence was influenced by the funding available through the CARES Act funds in combination with FITP/comparison group status (see also Figure 1).

Table 3. *Access to CARES Act funds through outreach to*

FITP versus the ad hoc comparison group

	FITP	No. Funded	Percent	Not-FITP	No. Funded	Percent
Total	249	193	78%	5058	2961	59%
First-generation	92	77	**84%**	1023	697	**68%**
Not first-generation	138	112	81%	3048	1938	64%
Pell Eligible	97	59	**61%**	1504	1124	**75%**
Not Pell Eligible	152	134	**88%**	4564	1837	40%

Table 4. *Regression results testing impact of group membership and CARES Act funds*

	Unstandardized coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized coefficient	sign.
(Constant)	.356	.090		
FITP (1), Comparison (0)	.107	.053	.14	*
Funded (1), Not Funded (0)	.062	.034	.08	
Group*Funding Interaction Term	-.126	.061	-.15	*
Credits at BOT	.005	.006	.03	
Credits for GPA Final	.003	.004	.04	
Term GPA	.110	.017	.31	***

Significant p-values, p< .05*, p<.01* p<.001***

Figure 1. *Group (FITP & Comparison) by Funding (Funded & Not Funded) Interaction*
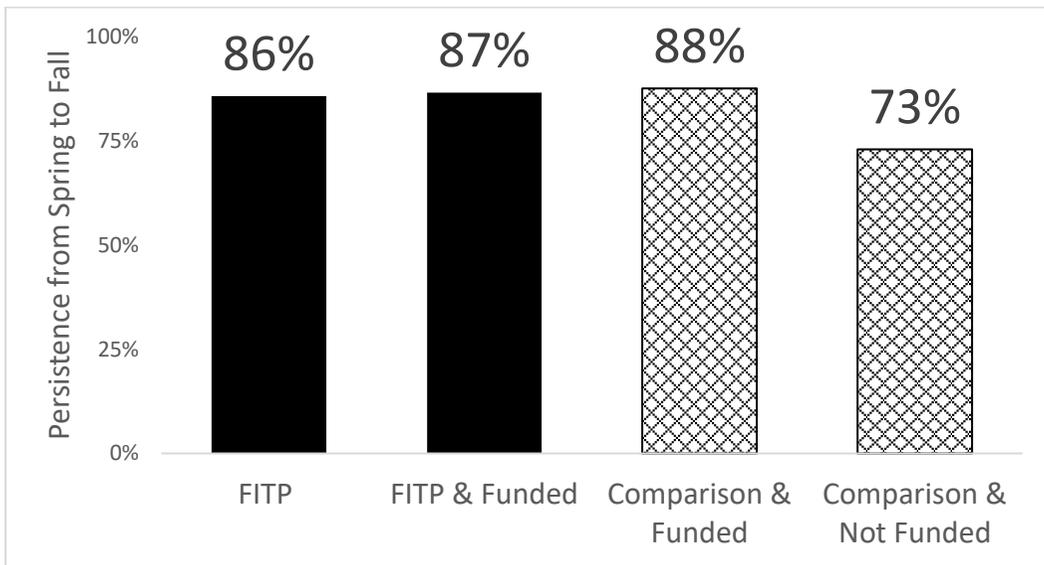
Figure 1 reveals that persistence was higher for students in FITP and students who received CARES Act funding. Persistence was lowest for students not in the FITP program and who did not get access to funds.

Discussion & Conclusion

First, the results of the analysis revealed that the FITP program was successful getting first-generation, though not Pell-eligible students to apply for CARES Act funds. More importantly, whether FITP mentees received CARES Act funds, they persisted from spring to fall. FITP is a successful peer-mentoring, retention program according to the comparison conducted in this study. FITP students were likely to persist before the COVID-19 crises, as well as in the face of the crises. Second, CARES Act funding for the comparison group of non-program participants made a notable difference in spring to fall persistence. After controlling for known predictors of persistence, GPA and credit load, students who received CARES Act funding in the comparison group had a relative increase in persistence of 21% (i.e. (% Funded – % Not Funded) / (% Not Funded)). That said, the role of semester GPA cannot be ignored, the academic performance of students maintained its primacy as the largest predictor of persistence – twice as large as the impact of the group by funding interaction. Academic performance is a well-known indicator of persistence through to graduation and the best predictor of college grades is high school GPA (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015). Clearly, institutions of higher education have a lot to do to support the academic success of the students they enroll.

Limitations

Student financial stress or financial insecurity was only indirectly addressed in this study. Pell-eligibility was used to assess access to CARES Act funds and to generate the comparison group. Students who were Pell-eligible in the FITP were less likely to access CARES Act funds. Pell-eligibility is an unsatisfactory indicator of financial stress and need; better indicators of financial resources need to be captured to effectively understand how students perform and persist in the face of crises, but also in ordinary times.

Peer mentoring programs appear to bolster student success and future analysis should investigate to what extent and via what mechanism peer mentor programs support academic performance. There are many questions and issues that proponents of peer mentor programs will need to address in the future: such as, what are the benefits to the mentors? Can peer mentor programs be scaled up? Are mentors simply a cheap source of labor? Do peer mentor programs effectively replace faculty mentors? How do biases inherent in social interaction (racism, sexism, ableism, etc.) impact peer mentor relationships, mentee integration, and mentee persistence? Just to name a few. Whether or not we are dealing with a viral, financial, or social pandemic, more research needs to be conducted on peer mentor programs.

Recommendations for Institutional Leaders

The direct monetary disbursements available with the CARES Act had a notable, positive relationship with student persistence. The availability of CARES Act funds were limited to a specific time and historical situation. Our simple analysis showed that the first-generation and low-income students in the peer-mentoring retention program withstood the crises and persisted. No doubt they would have persisted in ordinary times with the help, support, and encouragement of their peer-mentors.

<div align="center">**Appendix A: CARES Act Funding**</div>

As part of the federal government's Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the University of Nevada, Reno was approved for a one-time, limited allocation of funds designed to assist degree seeking students in need because of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruption of campus operations. The University completed the federal Certification and Agreement April 14, 2020 and agreed to use no less than 50% of the funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide Emergency Financial Grants to students. The CARES Act Funding became available to University of Nevada students on April 28, 2020.

The University of Nevada, Reno received $7,122,267 million from the US Department of Education for CARES Emergency Financial Aid Grants. As of July 13, 2020, the University of Nevada, Reno distributed $7,122,267 directly to students, in accordance with Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act.

The University of Nevada, Reno had approximately 11,800 students eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. Eligibility to receive CARES Act funding was limited to students who were actively participating in courses and programs that were not exclusively online on or after March 13, 2020. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education determined that international and undocumented students were not eligible for federal grants.

Within the total population, institutions were instructed to determine eligibility criteria for distribution of the grant and encouraged to prioritize students with the greatest need. As of July 13, 2020, the University of Nevada, Reno distributed all the CARES Act funds to 8,244 eligible students.

The University of Nevada, Reno determined eligibility criteria for distribution of emergency financial aid grant and encouraged the university to prioritize students with the greatest need. An Application for funding was created for eligible students to apply for the CARES Act funding. Students were notified that they could apply via an electronic application process that was made widely available. Applicants were required to complete an application for the CARES Act Funding.

Award amounts were determined by student enrollment level and socioeconomic circumstances. The amounts for undergraduate and graduate students ranged from $200 to $1,000, and from $200 to $5,000 for students in the School of Medicine.

Appendix B: Selection of the Comparison Group via Logistic Regression

The logistic regression to create the comparison group indicated the overall model fit was statistically reliable ($x^2(12) = 123.928, p< .001$). The model correctly classified 80% of cases. The logistic regression coefficients for the eight predictors used to generate the comparison group are presented in Table A.

Table A. Logistic Regression to Generate the Comparison Group

	B	Wald	df	sign.	Odds Ratio
First-generation status	-1.284	39.905	1	.000	.277
Pell eligibility	-.803	13.205	1	.000	.448
Family Income (EFC)	.000	4.517	1	.034	1.000
Sex	-.456	5.370	1	.020	.634
Age	.617	19.614	1	.000	1.854
State Residency	-1.661	13.142	1	.000	.190
Race or Ethnicity	-1.263	11.524	1	.001	.283
Asian	-1.799	22.175	1	.000	.166
Black	-1.763	37.379	1	.000	.171
Latinx	-1.214	.881	1	.348	.297
Native American	.106	.058	1	.810	1.112
Multi-ethnic	-.593	5.417	1	.020	.553
High School GPA	-5.491	4.392	1	.036	.004
Constant	-1.284	39.905	1	.000	.277

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Turning on a Dime: Implications of an Unanticipated Shift to Online Learning of a Multicultural Service-Learning Course: Lessons and Insights for Higher Education Administrators and Instructors on Student-Centered Learning Opportunities.

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Introduction and Background

Spring 2020 heralded once-in-a-century world-wide challenges to institutions of higher education—first by the advent of the new Coronavirus, that spawned the COVID-19 pandemic and then by the social-justice pandemic brought to a head May 25th, 2020 when George Floyd died due to police brutality. That spurred nationwide and international protests including one large peaceful demonstration on May 30th of about 1000 people in a town bordering our campus. At evening, it escalated into a riot where two banks burned to the ground and multiple businesses were looted.

The disruptions these events caused called for creative leadership to neutralize the "business as usual" culture many higher education institutions espouse. Our university, fourth largest in the California State University[1] attended to the social-justice issue swiftly and decisively. Since June 2018, our new president began placing faculty of color in high-profile roles that allowed them to undertake palliative measures to ameliorate student and faculty feelings of unrest, anomie, and confusion as summer sessions began. That was not the case in our university's response to COVID-19 several months earlier.

In mid-March 2020 with little warning, the university ripped students from face-to-face classroom and field-work experiences to online learning. Concurrently, residential students were given a few days' notice to vacate their rooms and find lodging or return home. Though university infrastructure offered multiple avenues of support, students did not have or did not know about university-sponsored sites where they could get the social-emotional guidance they needed to quell their feelings of fear, confusion, and betrayal. Our students in spring 2020 told us they thought the move to online learning would be a recapitulation of other online courses they had taken which required students to work solo on academic tasks-with little access to the instructor or other students. A student we taught in fall 2020 stated, "Last semester [spring 2020] was the worst ever no one in this university knew what they were doing." The university's Instructional Technology Services offered faculty cursory training on Zoom use in March 2020. The university's then instructional management system was difficult to navigate and was not optimal for module construction.

The service-learning leadership team (the team) of the Pre-College Institute (PCI) understood that the university's handling of the shift to online learning would impact the student engagement and

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[1] http://asd.calstate.edu/dashboard/enrollment-live.html

academic success of our low-income and culturally diverse students more harshly than it would their more affluent peers. Thus, the "business as usual" pivot to online learning would create learning and opportunity disparities for our students. We understood that the multicultural culture we had built at PCI exemplified–"school reform." As Valerie Pang states, "Multicultural education . . . is a field in education that calls for total school reform and is based on the belief that education is an intellectual and ethical endeavor where students are provided equity in schools [. . ..] Multicultural education focuses on teaching the whole student" p.16 (Pang, 2018). Our resolve for our service-learning course, (TE-362 Fieldwork in Community Settings) was to pivot to online while preserving face-to-face instructional features consonant with culturally relevant teaching so as to increase student engagement and success in our service-learning courses. We understood that we were implementing a student-centered curriculum in contrast to large lecture-based university courses. Our standard was that student satisfaction with the spring 2020 online course as measured by institutional student evaluations would be at least as positive as for the cohorts who took the face-to-face course in spring and fall 2019.

To test this outcome, the team engaged in a collaborative self-study that articulates the lessons learned from quickly shifting TE-362 to online learning due to social distancing restrictions imposed by the pandemic. We attribute our success to our common belief that dedication to strategic thinking, distributed leadership practices, and student-centered instruction will move educational institutions to equitable educational opportunities for underrepresented groups. These features enabled vertical integration of administration, management, leadership, and instructional practices to manage crisis quickly and effectively.

PCI's Pathways Office (Pathways) annually recruits, screens, selects and places over 100 undergraduate service-learning tutors who tutor k-12 students at 20 underserved partner schools.[2]

Beginning March 2020, our TE-362 students shared their disappointment and frustration with the university's inconsistent responses to the COVID-19 crisis. After mid-March, our twice-weekly synchronous online classes became a landing space for students. They could talk about educational trends and instructional strategies and receive support needed to engage with course activities. The team conserved experiential collaboration, inquiry, and organizational skills with the integration of academic reading and writing, features that mark culturally relevant instruction. To build new concepts or deepen understanding, instructors scaffolded content and the acquisition of digital skills tailored to individual needs. The team practiced self-reflection and reflexive practice (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Pelias, 2001; Schön,1983; Smyth, 1992) to design online instruction, improve program administration, and provide effective online social-emotional support to support learning as students learned to cope with change. As we worked together toward these goals, relationships began to emerge that were characteristic of distributed leadership. We agreed to engage in a collaborative self-study.

Purpose and Significance

Self-study has four decades of scholarly development as a research approach that identifies these themes (Louie, et al., 2003):

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[2] In 2019-2020 Pathways trained 134 students (44% low-income and first-generation college students, 24% first-generation only, 8% low-income only, and 24% were neither; ethnic distribution: 21 Asian, 9 Black/African American, 76 Hispanic/Latinx, 1 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2 Somali, and 25 White/Caucasian).

- *Identity-Oriented Research*- pursued when the teacher/scholar's purpose is to clarify their identity as they become aware that their values differ from those of their educational institution;
- *Relationship Between Teaching Beliefs and Practice*- pursued when the teacher/scholar's purpose is to improve their teaching practice; and
- *Collegial Interaction*- pursued when two or more teacher/scholars' purpose tends toward "examining the roles of social support, peer input and/or collegial relationships in teaching and professional activities" p. 154.

Our spring 2020 journey brought us into unknown digital territory. As we were handling unanticipated change and simultaneously creating a student-centered digital learning environment. Our course was not, according to our students, what they were experiencing in their typical classes. We wondered what there was about us that could explain how we so swiftly made programmatic and instructional changes that benefited students when the university from higher administration.[3] on down was struggling to meet administrative, faculty, instructional, and student-services demands imposed by "shelter-in-place" and "teleworking" policies. We felt compelled to examine who we were collectively and how the relationships we developed resembled distributed leadership. We also wanted to clarify how our instructional improvements over three semesters were preserved through the transition to digital learning.

This paper adds to the discussion of how distributed leadership develops in an emergent change process and its role in sustaining change in our specific context (Vuori, J., 2019, p. 225; Bennett, et al., 2003). As we grappled with maintaining student engagement in a complex online context, it became clear that the "business as usual" hierarchical approach to leading change would have to change to prioritize distance-learning expertise.

This paper also contributes to the ongoing conversation of the value of collaborative self-study for higher education administrators, faculty, and instructional staff. We present a rich narrative description of how we used our unit's organizational infrastructure, established norms, and administrative and instructional expertise to quickly manage and create change. Our unit's experience may serve as a microcosm of how university administrators might have thought differently about the COVID-19 challenges as a pilot (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Balogun and Hope Haley, et al., 2008; Kempster et al., 2014) or as a natural experiment.[4]

We demonstrated our pivot from face-to-face to online instruction by honoring our students' voices through their quantitative and qualitative evaluations of our instruction.

In what follows, we present each participant researcher's narrative reflecting how we each viewed our contributions to the change process and our emerging leadership roles. Next, we present a synopsis of the literature on distributed leadership as a mechanism for institutional change, followed by our methodology. We conclude with a presentation of results and discussion of the lessons learned.

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[3] Our university is one of 23 campuses with a centralized administration headed by a chancellor. During the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, the chancellor's office made the ultimate decisions regarding campus closings, the date online classes would begin and the like.

[4] "a natural experiment occurs when a particular intervention has been implemented but the circumstances surrounding the implementation are not under the control of researchers (Craig et "a natural experiment occurs when a particular intervention has been implemented but the circumstances surrounding the implementation are not under the control of researchers (Craig et al., 2012, 2011). . . .features of natural experiments are that the implementation of the intervention is not dependent on whether or not there is a plan to evaluate the intervention and random allocation of the intervention is not feasible for ethical or political reasons (Craig et al., 2012, 2011" as cited in Leatherdale, 2018).

<p style="text-align:center">Narratives[5]</p>

The Lecturer/Instructional Designer's (Liz's) narrative addresses her leadership in instructional design and appropriating, implementing, and sharing with us and the students the digital tools that preserved the multicultural coursework and culturally relevant teaching practices.

The Executive Director's (Cynthia's) narrative addresses Louie's (2003) first suggestion on the conduct of self-study: consideration of the preconditions to collaborative self-study in our specific higher education context.

The PCI Director of Service Learning (Nadia's) narrative addresses her leadership as an infrastructure builder, strategic thinker, and cross-administrative unit coordinated communications to offer students social/emotional navigational support to enhance what was provided within the classroom.

The Tutor Coach's (Katie's) Narrative addresses her emerging role as she became socialized in her new position in a new organizational culture.

Liz's Narrative:

During fall 2018 as the Pathways tutor trainer, I facilitated collaborative, inquiry-based seminars for TE-362 students. I supported Pathways' service learners, anchoring learning in the social and cultural capital students brought to TE-362. As an educator, teacher educator, and emerging teacher-scholar, my career focuses on addressing racial injustice in diverse schools. My pedagogy grows through building of relationships and a reflective lens propelling learners beyond mastery.

In the spring 2018, Dr. Park approached me about facilitating TE-362.[6] I would teach the content as stated in the syllabus, staying true to the learning intent while anchoring my facilitation in the Five Stages of Service Learning designed by Catherine Berger Kaye (2010). Focusing on reciprocity and culturally relevant teaching, I dug into Kaye's work as a protocol to nurture student's mastery of course outcomes.[7] Connections between the Five Stages of Service Learning and culturally relevant teaching provide relevance to the expert skillset I brought to the classroom (Philipsen, 2003).

On that first day as lecturer in spring of 2018, I looked at the TE-362 students and instantly saw my high school AVID[8] students. As a high school AVID teacher, I worked with a diverse population of students, growing dreams of college into realities, and building a foundation to use as a teacher educator committed to equity. Through culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rodriguez et al., 2004; Delpit, 1992; Pang and Park, 2011; Pang, 2018), my students and I built our learning community, sharing perspectives to enhance the content while valuing each student for the unique gifts, perspectives, and dispositions brought to our learning space.

Dr. Park is more than my executive director. Through reciprocity, we share the best of ourselves and experiences as educators. I shared my collaboration gifts, and she imparted buckets of knowledge on university research that supports my commitment to self-improvement as a Ph.D. in Education

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[5] The narratives appearing in this article are summaries of the original narratives produced as part of the research process because of limitations of space. Content analysis of the narratives using N-Vivo was performed on the original narratives.

[6] I earned my Master of Education at Seattle Pacific University in Digital Education Leadership in June of 2020.

[7] The Pathways Service-Learning team collaborates each semester to refine the course syllabus to ensure students are prepared for a successful semester of fieldwork in community settings.

[8] AVID- Advancement Via Individual Determination is an educational non-profit committed to equity and racial justice (AVID, n.d.).

student. Dr. Park's core values focus on equity; her transition to my critical friend was seamless (Breslin et al., 2008). Our relationship supports my reflection and refinement from teacher-to-teacher educator, to university-teacher-educator and emerging-teacher-scholar.

The move to digital instruction was poised for success through support and trust from Pathways program leaders. The TPACK model (Koehler, 2012) propels teaching best practices, engaging students in the application of learning (Koehler et al., 2013). Using the premise of *Learning First, Digital Tools Second* (Kolb, 2017), synchronous learning supported learners in conceptualizing and applying The Five Stages of Service Learning. My graduate-level research on digital learning pedagogy, utilized digital culturally relevant student-centered approaches like the QUEST Model of Inquiry (Wicks, 2018) aiding in the emergency response to the twin pandemics.

Scaffolded instruction helps learners engage in new learning. Within the multicultural class, scaffolding experience and culture are equally important for deep learning, while supporting critical reflection of self and peers (Rodriguez et al., 2004). The TE-362 digital classroom modeled digital inquiry-based collaboration in the synchronous setting. I nurtured the digital classroom like I had in every classroom before, focusing on the student-centered inquiry through experiential collaboration. These routines helped students feel comfortable sharing while reinforcing 'the build' of students' relational capacity as a foundation of the learning space.

The digital student-centered agenda focused the metacognitive conversation of learning that was the same no matter the setting through a focus on course outcomes. I affirmed students' unique perspectives as they took control of our digital presentations and peer reviews. Through reciprocity, the student applied learning as instructional tutors for the k-12 urban student, while broadening their cultural lens as they learned more about themselves and their peers. A commitment to culturally relevant teaching preserved the metacognition and critical thinking often missing in a higher education setting (Blau & Shamir-Inbal, 2017). This reciprocal learning relationship in our digital classroom propelled the learner's engagement beyond the status quo. Our collaborative self-study is an opportunity to address how a commitment to culturally relevant teaching (Pang, 2018) and digital learning best practices demonstrate a solution to the twin pandemics.

Cynthia's Narrative:

In the early nineties I founded a multicultural unit adept at bridging the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers. (Pang, V. & Park, C. D., 2003; Rodriguez et al.,2004; Pang, V.O. and Park, C.D., 2011.), The Pre-College Institute.

So that PCI could adjust to rapid change nimbly, I began in 2010, moving the organization from management-by-objective to a strategic-planning organization. By spring 2020, we had adopted priorities that privileged service to the whole student with five values honoring social justice. (Clift, et al., 2005)[9] PCI'S ethos is reflected in a compass relaying a commitment to culturally responsive teaching, counseling, and college advising by accepting the whole student. We honor students' choices, and we provide students with academic, social & emotional support.[10] Equity, excellence, ethic-of-caring, advocacy, and learning comprise our core values. In 2009, I founded the Pathways Office for Careers in STEM Education as PCI's service-learning arm. Pathways is vertically organized making advising, training, instruction, and social-emotional support available in one place. Vertical integration

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[9]Clift, et al., (2005) reinforces our assessment of our readiness to undertake this study. She notes that her research team began to coalesce when they became committed to the common goal of researching the relationship between teacher education coursework and career development after graduation. (p. 95).

10 Email from Erika Espinosa to PCI Executive Director November 22, 2017. The compass was designed in August 2017 and was completed in November 2017. It was patterned after that of the "Four Seasons Hotel Chain" (See Ready and Truelove, 2011).

helps students get what they need quickly. The flow of communication among staff and faculty is direct. Boundaries between personnel are fluid. Because of the relationship I built with Liz, as I observed and guided her first outing teaching the spring 2019 TE-362 class, I became her *critical friend*, a crucial role for self-study research.

Beginning February 27th, 2020, university leadership began issuing cautionary messages about health and safety, starting with the suspension of spring semester study abroad programs in China, South Korea, and Italy due to the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission and the US Department of State travel warnings.[11] Along with these announcements, faculty and instructional staff were asked to modify course requirements regarding absences to limit adverse impacts on students who may become sick.[12] Faculty had also received emails encouraging individual instructional accommodations to students on a person-by-person basis for those who may be experiencing difficulties in attending classes. Given this messaging and my reading about how this new coronavirus worked, I foresaw on March 7th that the university would be moving to online instruction quickly. I hoped that there would be some lead time to get prepared to make the transition. On March 9th, I met with Liz Buffington, the PCI Pathways Instructional Designer and Lecturer in the STE. She was in her third semester of instructing TE-362. I stated the Pathways team had to begin our instruction and other supports for our students online as soon as possible. Because of her expertise in all things digital, I knew she was the person who could and should take the lead in pivoting instruction to online learning. On that day, I passed the baton to her. I informed the instructional leadership team that we would have two face-to-face sessions to prepare students for the transition; we would conduct online sessions synchronously to minimize disruption by keeping student's face-to-face time schedules constant in the transition. Synchronous meetings would also signal to students that this online class would be different from most of the other online classes they had experienced.

The President's office issued a series of emails to the campus community: By March 9th, all study abroad programs for spring break and summer were being suspended.[13] On March 10th with the approval of the University Senate all faculty were encouraged "to transition as soon as possible from in-person meetings and classes to distributed or fully virtual modalities."[14] Faculty were mandated to make the transition no later than April 6th. Transition to online would remain in effect until the end of the spring semester. Shortly thereafter, I told my staff that online instruction would probably go on into the summer and probably fall 2020 as well. On April 8, the president emailed the university community that all summer courses would be entirely online.[15] My role as executive director was to provide insight that the move to online instruction would be sooner than had been anticipated and to prepare the staff for a long siege even though the university was communicating in a series of short-run messages. Simultaneously, I assessed the readiness of the instructional leadership team to undertake the

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[11] February 27, 2020 email from the Interim Associate Vice President for Global Affairs and the International Student Center Director to the University Community

[12] March 4, 2020 email Interim Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs & Chief Financial Officer, University Senate Chair, Interim Associate Vice President for Global Affairs, International Student Center Director to the University Community

[13] March 9, 2020 email from University President, Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, University Senate Chair to University Community

[14] March 10, 2020 email from University President, Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, University Senate Chair, Associated Students President

[15] April 8, 2020 email from University President, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, University Senate Chair to the University Community

challenges of this shift, the resources of the administrative structure and the ethos of PCI that were favorable to the implementation of the change. As planning for synchronous and asynchronous online instruction got underway, I assessed the readiness of my team to undertake a narrative self-study. Each of the participating researchers have advanced academic training, were open to embarking on the research journey, and had a stake in the change process. Liz had engaged in post graduate narrative research under my tutelage. Three of the four team members had worked closely for at least three years building the trust required for collaboration. Katie received coaching from Nadia and Liz, assisting her quick socialization to PCI's ethos.

Nadia's Narrative:

The Pathways infrastructure that I established made it possible for our entire team to 'turn on a dime' with agility. Key features that supported us include communication, Open Hours[16], resource sharing, work-study, and community building. I demonstrate an ethic of care (Pang, 2018) and listen through the lens of equity. Our students have multiple layers of expectations bestowed upon them at home beyond their college academics. Many are the primary caregivers to siblings and grandparents. With the immediate shut down of most work sectors, the students became the primary income earners in their households. I made myself the subject matter expert on the resources available at the university, in the community, and in the state. I researched and attended meetings to learn upcoming plans, resources, and opportunities. I communicated this information to our team and our students in the methods that matched their preferences.

The open space and calm that the Pathways Office provided in-person, was replicated in the digital space. We started open hours on March 19th. Through student-centered communication, I fostered relationship building for the Pathways Service-Learning team, grounding our daily work in cultural responsiveness based on what our students brought to the program. During that time, I would field questions about what to expect during virtual tutoring. Students would catch up with each other and share stories about their families. They shared about struggles, anxiety, and worries regarding how to balance all that was on their place. I sent email updates and posted to social media with latest information learned, any steps needed for the tutors to take, and links to resources. I was present in the TE-362 virtual sessions to provide background support, answer questions, and direct students to available resources.

I knew early on that tutoring would either pause for the semester or go virtual. We gave students the option to continue tutoring virtually or take the remainder of the semester off, knowing students count on the fieldwork experience and paychecks, I ensured they would receive credit for virtual learning and tutoring.

Once it became clear that all tutoring would be virtual, I continued to outreach to partner teachers, administrators, and faculty, all overwhelmed by virtual learning. We hosted collaborative workshops for teachers and tutors to navigate this new reality together, creating additional supports for working with students in a virtual space.

As a team, we were faced with uncertainty, mixed emotions about what comes next, the trauma of the pandemic, the rapid shift to home-based learning and work. The Pathways–Team's distributed leadership existed prior to the pandemic, it was further highlighted by our response to the pandemic(s), each person knowing their role and supporting each other for the greater good of the students (Harris,

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[16] Pathways Service-Learning Lead Tutors conduct open office hours taking one or more service-learning courses within the program and support students at each school site. These student leaders act as first line communication between the school and the Pathways Administrators. Lead Tutors are trained for this role and provided job specific professional development opportunities to support job duties.

2004). The whiplash of the changes and target dates was exhausting. My priority is taking care of students and staff.

Katie's Narrative:

When I started the position in January 2020, I felt supported as I adjusted to the position. Liz trusted me with redesigning portions of the tutor training. This practice of distributed leadership, or "multiple sources of guidance and direction" allowed me to implement simulations where experienced tutors would act out common issues in tutoring (Harris, 2004, p.14). This activity was well received by tutors with 73% of the 75 respondents stating that they strongly agreed with the following statement: "The simulations activity helped prepare me to be an effective tutor." The simulation allowed returning tutors to share their perspectives from working in multicultural classrooms. This activity valued the students 'cultural capital and affirmed their knowledge and insight.

As we transitioned to virtual instruction in March 2020, it was important that we preserve the essential aspects of the TE-362 class: student collaboration, student voice, and feedback. We knew that students needed a space to process what they were going through in transitions to distance learning; a social and emotional check-in at the beginning of each class allowed students to share how they were and hear from peers. We anchored the learning in the prior knowledge and experience that each student brought to the classroom. I assisted redesigning and co-facilitating the third and fourth seminar, both focused on skills that would help our students succeed in the digital classroom. Our co-facilitation of seminars served as a reminder to the tutors that the whole Pathways team was eager to support them. This level of support was important given that students were no longer able to access other systems of support that were available to them when they were physically on campus.

Distributed Leadership

Alma Harris (2004) built on Richard Elmore's (2000) compelling discussion of the essential role distributed leadership plays to teaching and learning institutions thusly,

> "Distributed leadership … means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organization, made coherent through a common culture." (p.14)

Although there does not seem to be consensus among higher education administrators on what distributed leadership means, we are adopting the confluence between Harris's and Bennett's definition that distributed leadership is:

> [The] emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals working with an openness of boundaries and the varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few" (Bennett et al., 2003 p. 7 as cited in Vuori (2019); and Kemster, et al., (2014).

Through analysis of our study's participant researchers' independently written narratives, we aim to interpret how each one is understanding and acting on the concept of "distributed leadership" in any one of several ways that have been labeled as "distributed" leadership, "distributed leadership," "shared leadership" or "constructive leadership" and the like (Vuori, 2019 p.225). We focus on how leadership practice is distributed among the formal and informal leaders in our unit and how it may emerge and change. How can we use our common experience at managing and implementing change "on a dime" to assess our progress in forming a collective ethos? How have we created a collective way of doing

things where members freely pool and share their expertise and knowhow with others in ways that lead to constructive change (Bennett et al.,2003: 3 as cited in Harris, 2004).[17]

These questions formed the themes that led to coding and analysis of the narratives we produced as participant researchers.

Method

Collaborative self-study enabled our research team to describe preservation of instructional features made over the past two semesters to online instruction. We posited that the preservation of these features would maintain student engagement and satisfaction with the course. We have followed the tenets adopted by Heejeong, et al. (2014).

Heejeong and six colleagues formed a cross-disciplinary collaborative self-study team exploring culturally responsive pedagogy in higher education. Their focus was to "define, enact, and navigate [their] roles as culturally responsive educators" within the cultural norms and structure of their higher education institution. Defining themselves as "participant researchers," they informed their approach using Hamilton and Pinnegar's (1998) definition of self-study as examining themselves, their actions, and ideas. Heejeong and her colleagues went beyond autobiographical accounts. They incorporated thoughtful consideration of the literature, their common and unique experiences, the coterie of relationships that impacted their collaborative negotiations with one another across disciplinary boundaries. They relied on Vicki Laboskey's 2004 work which articulated the features of self-study as, "self-initiated and focused…improvement aimed, . . .interactive [and] it includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods" (p. 817). They accepted Feldman, Paugh, and Mills, 2004, observation that self-study participants, "problematize themselves in their practice situations" (p.971). Their methodology was grounded on the seminal work of Pinnegar and Placier, 1996 and Hamilton and Pinnegar, 2013 who through collaboration, furthered their own identities as teacher educator and formulated tenets guiding collaborative research methodology as a valid research approach (as cited in Heejeong et al., p. 294). We used a mixed-method design analyzing qualitative and quantitative data (Cresswell and Pohl, 2018).

Study Participants

The participants for this collaborative self-study are the four participant researchers responsible for implementing shifts to digital learning during spring 2020 and their 19 TE-362 students who experienced these shifts in instruction delivery. The participant researchers were staff of the Pathways Office, two of whom were faculty in STE, one of seven departments of the College of Education (COE) at San Diego State University (SDSU). Of the 19 students, 10 were Latinx, 5 identified as mixed race, two were Caucasians, and one was Vietnamese; 15 were Pell Eligible and two were grant-funded.

Data Sources

The participant researchers' individual open-ended narratives are primary data sources informing collaborative research. The principal researcher asked colleagues to reflect on experiences during the spring 2020 pivot to online instruction and to describe:

- Role(s) and contribution to the change process.
- How each one saw herself as a member of the administrative and instructional team.
- How each one saw herself as a leader in during the crisis.

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[17] These questions are suggested by Alma Harris', 2004 exposition based on Bennett et al., p.3.

Discussions of distributive leadership prompted participant researchers to think of examples of actions that represented the skill sets they shared with the team toward the overarching goal of student success. Additional data sources were:

Source 1 (Institutional Student-Evaluation Instrument): The same 11 questions appear in Spring 2019, Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. Questions were grouped into three variables: I*nstruction and course management, Teaching pedagogy and Teacher relationship with students*. This instrument is administered by the university at the end of each semester. Responses are on a 5-point rating scale: 1= poor -- 5=excellent. Student responses are anonymous and analyzed independently. The qualitative section prompts four free-responses: In*structor's strengths, Potential changes to the course, Additional comments,* and *Student's major.*

Source 2 (Synchronous Class Sessions- Zoom Recordings): Twelve Zoom recordings (March 10th to May 7th) were transcribed and timestamped with the speaker's name identifying where student or instructor contributions reflected the themes of the research. Recordings ranged from 50-60 minutes. Recording's document facilitated discussions, group work, and other instructional practices. The recordings captured debriefs among the authors.

Source 3 (TE-362 Syllabus): The TE-362 syllabus developed by Liz Buffington in collaboration with the other authors was revised to reflect the pivot to online learning. It communicated: course curriculum, objectives, activities, materials, and university policies.

Source 4 (Padlet Student Check-in): Padlet, a digital learning tool was used for student perceptions and discussion of instructional techniques was analyzed. There were eight questions about how students felt about the class, their reactions to digital learning, and how they related to course material.

Source 5 (Emails from PCI Pathways Office): Fourteen emails sent by the Pathways (February 12th-May 9th). Emails between tutors and Pathways were a major communication between tutors and the administration.

Analysis

Narratives were coded for six themes suggested by Bennett, 2003 Elmore,2000 Harris,2004 Vouri,2019 and Kempster et al. 2014. They were: *Recognition of a common goal centered on student success or attention to the "Whole Student, Recognition of common values pertinent to addressing the common goal, Recognition of being part of an interactive group*, *Willingness to cross boundaries, Recognition and ownership of an area or areas of expertise, Examples of pooling or sharing knowledge.*

Four qualitative sources of data and student comments in the institutional student-evaluation instrument were analyzed with N-Vivo, a qualitative analysis software. Three core themes pertinent to this study were developed through a discussion[18], they are:

- Student-administrative relationship
- Adaptations and changes
- Support of the whole student.

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[18] This discussion between Liz and the Research Assistant-Christopher Balingit (B.A. in History) focused on institutional evaluations and the revised course syllabus.

The theme, *student-administration relationship,* tapped Pathways' maintenance of relationships with students during online instruction, and their reactions to these efforts. *Adaptations and changes* focused on demonstrable shifts in administration or instruction because of transition to online and students' reaction to change. *Supporting the whole student,* an extension of empathetic student-centered instruction focused on student needs to foster an equitable learning space. The sources were coded and analyzed by N-Vivo.

Accompanying this analysis is the quantitative data featured in the institutional student evaluations collected anonymously from TE-362's students. The mean and standard deviation for each question and for variables were calculated by the cognizant university unit and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations from Institutional Student Evaluation Instrument		Spring 2020 (n=19)		Fall 2019 (n=19)		Spring 2019 (n=15)	
Group 1: Instruction/Management of Course	Question	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Question #1	Rate the Instructor's overall organization and presentation of the course material	4.86	0.36	4.58	0.69	4.87	0.35
Question #2	Rate the Instructor's focus on the student learning outcomes listed in the syllabus.	4.93	0.27	4.68	0.67	4.87	0.35
Question #3	Rate the Instructor's teaching overall	4.86	0.36	4.74	0.45	4.73	0.59
Overall Results		4.88	0.33	4.67	0.61	4.82	0.44
Group 2: Teaching Pedagogy							
Question #4	Rate the quality of the instructor's feedback on your performance in the course.	4.93	0.27	4.68	0.67	4.87	0.35
Question #5	Rate the instructor's use of clear grading/evaluation procedures	4.79	0.43	4.39	1.14	4.67	0.62
Question #6	Rate the instructor's ability to positively affect your understanding of the content of the course.	4.86	0.36	4.67	0.84	4.87	0.35
Question #7	Rate the instructor's ability to facilitate critical thinking in the course.	4.86	0.36	4.72	0.67	4.87	0.35
Question #8	Rate the instructor's ability to positively affect your development of competencies associated with professionals in the field.	4.93	0.27	4.61	0.98	4.80	0.56
Overall Results		4.87	0.34	4.62	0.86	4.82	0.45
Group 3: Teacher Relationships with Students							
Question #9	Rate the instructor's responsiveness to student needs.	4.93	0.27	4.61	0.98	4.86	0.36
Question #10	Rate the instructor's abilty to facilitate meaningful student participation.	4.86	0.36	4.58	1.02	4.87	0.35
Question #11	Rate the instructor's ability to foster inclusiveness of diverse populations and perspectives	4.86	0.38	4.67	0.84	4.87	0.35
Overall Results		4.88	0.34	4.62	0.92	4.87	0.35

Student responses on the institutional student evaluations demonstrates the positive reaction students had to PCI Pathways' model as implemented in the TE-362 course. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation for each of the eleven questions and for each of the three variables. The mean results across all the three variables ranged from 4.62 to 4.88 and the standard deviations ranged from .33-.92. Given the closeness of the ranges for the spring of 2019 and spring 2020 for both the means and the standard deviations across the three variables indicates there was not much variability among the students in their evaluation of these variables for those semesters. These results indicate that students reacted positively to the online course's instruction and design as well as to the instructor during the Spring 2020 semester.

Table 2.

Table 2

Samples and Results from the Data Sources by Major Themes

	Institutional Student Evaluation Instrument	Synchronous Class Session Zoom Recordings (n=12)	Syllabus TE 362 (Revised)	TE 362 Padlet-Student Check-in	Emails from Pathways Director and Office (n=14)	Overall Occurences
Examples of Student-Admin Relationship	n/a	"It's not just that it influenced me in the way that students have played an important role in my life but also the Pathways personnel. I think you guys are super helpful, always willing to help and you caused a huge impact on me as a tutor and future teacher..."-Student 7	"Fieldwork in Community Settings is a pre-professional, action-oriented program. Each student is expected to adhere to minimum standards of professionalism"	"I believe Pathways did the best the could of giving everyone information on the different opportunities especially with such circumstances changing rapidly"	"In an effort to provide you with support for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester, we would like to provide you with virtual office hour options this week and next week to connect, check-in and assist you with any questions you may have."	
Frequency	0	7	12	11	20	38
Examples of Adaptations and Changes	"she was very good about sending email reminders when things were due"	"The intent of this seminar has been changed and we wanted to give you some different strategies that you can use in your virtual tutoring settings to give the learning responsibility to the students."-Liz Buffington	"Breakout sessions to plan for Reciprocal Teaching."	"Our biggest surprise about the merge from Face2Face to Virtual learning was that there were many other skills that we had to learn with technology."	"This will open opportunities for you to tutor using technology that may be new to you or to those we are working with. Starting this upcoming week you will get an invitation to be part of a Pathways Learning community for virtual tutoring. This is how we will manage the training modules and self-paced sections. Each module will be paid time. Once they are complete you can tutor."	
Frequency	2	48	11	13	76	
Examples of Supporting Whole Student	"Energy, responsiveness, supportive, motivating, engaging, inclusiveness"	"I think you guys did a really good job. When I got the email from Nadia saying like you don't have to tutor if you don't want to but here are the opportunities that we have like I thought it was like really clear and straightforward but also there was no pressure to continue tutoring if I didn't want to or didn't feel like I could. I think also with the open office hours every day that's also been really good..."-Student 8 (Student feedback on Pathways communication and support)	"This class has been structured in a way that, whether you will be a first-time tutor, or you are returning, will allow you to get the most out of your experiences this semester."	"This was a safe space for me as I was able to talk about how I felt in certain situations while also getting all the support I needed during this time."	"I know the struggle of trying to find a quiet space to work and balance all of the demands of family life now that we are all home at the same time. I look forward to hearing your creative ideas on what works for you."	
Frequency	2	17	12	12	11	41

Table 2 shows a cross-break between the major themes found in the qualitative data and the data sources. For the student-evaluation instrument, the table shows which questions were included in each variable. The table shows the frequencies of the intersection between the data source and the core theme. In synchronous class sessions zoom recordings, there are 7 instances of *Examples of Student-Admin Relationship*, demonstrating the regular connection between the student and the administrators. For this data source there are 48 instances of examples of *Adaptations and Changes*. The major change occurred as a pivot to online instruction that manifested in course delivery and not in the administration of the service-learning program; thus, it makes sense that most of the instances appear in the data source *Synchronous Class Session Zoom Recording*. Overall, the 76 instances of *Adaptations and Changes* across all data sources articulate commitment to a successful pivot by the Pathways team demonstrating 'turning on a dime' was a team effort supported by distributed leadership. The vertical integration between student-to-teacher interactions with the course and student interactions in the Pathways administrative office is shown by a relationship between the instances of *Examples of Adaptations and Changes* and *Examples of Student-Admin Relationship*. This demonstrates a calibration of frequency across curriculum as found in the syllabus and the administrative commitment to the support of the whole student. The research theme, *Examples of Supporting the Whole Student* illustrates the team's vertical integration, focusing support structures across synchronous class sessions, program, and support emails from the program director, Padlet student check-in, and the course curriculum objectives of the course syllabus. The similar frequency of instances for the syllabus across all data themes again demonstrates the vertical integration of instructor and administrator support of the student within the classroom and program.

Table 3.

Table 3					
Themes for Distributed Leadership	Dr. Cynthia Park, PhD 1161 words	Liz Buffington words 1146	Nadia Rohlinger, MA words 688	Katie Bodie words 315	Number of Utterances
A Common Goal: Student Success Attention to the "Whole Student"	3	9	9	4	25
Common Values Pertinent to Addressing the Common Goal	3	3	3	1	10
Being Part of an Interactive Group	9	2	5	1	17
Willingness to Cross Boundaries	3	1	3	1	8
Area(s) Expertise	7	12	3	1	23
Pooling or Sharing Knowledge	3	3	2	1	9

Emerging Themes

The results in Table 3 show the distributed-leadership themes as defined from the literature. The qualitative data was analyzed for the utterance frequencies reflective of those themes as reflected in the researchers' original narratives. The common goal for student success is most prevalent for the lead author of the study and the PCI Director of Service Learning. The newest member of the team and the Executive Director had frequencies in this category that were a third of the frequency of the other two members of the team. The frequencies for the common values were stable across the participants; however, everyone mentioned at least one. Being part of an interactive group was most mentioned by the administrators. Willingness to cross boundaries was not highly mentioned by the members of the group but was most mentioned by the two administrators. Areas of expertise was most mentioned by the lead participant researcher as she was the one most responsible for initiating change through the appropriation of new tools used in new ways to support the whole student during disruptions caused by the pandemic. Pooling of shared knowledge was stable across the four participant researchers.

Lessons Learned

The data shows students were satisfied with the course. Our teams' dedication to 'turning on a dime' through student-centered instruction wrapped in culturally relevant pedagogy was successful. In Table 1 the standard of success we identified as our primary goal during the study was met. For each of the variables the score was slightly higher for the online delivery than for the face-to-face delivery in prior semesters. Table 1, Question 9 results indicate that our focus on the needs of each student created a safe space where the commitment to an ethic- of-care nurtured the student in the service-learning curriculum during a just-in-time strategic response to a change in instructional delivery. Table 2 the analysis of 5 qualitative data sources shown as a matrix connects the results of each data source to the themes of the study indicate the vertical integration of the curriculum, instruction, and the administrative personnel. Table 3 data shows that the instructional team is an emerging distributed leadership organization. As a team we should work on intentionally crossing boundaries. In this study, areas of expertise were skewed with the Lead Researcher and Executive Director overly represented in sharing knowledge and expertise.

Instructional best practice was possible during the spring 2020 semester through administrative support, their strategic thinking supported the whole student. We reflexively evaluate administrative and instructional systems to support today's college student. Our microcosm is unique, but also lives within higher education institutions across our nation. This collaborative self-study was facilitated by

the vertical alignment that our strategic thinking supported. Together we meet the needs of our culturally diverse students through emerging distributed leadership. Our narrative demonstrates each researcher's role-based reflection as they 'turned on a dime', meeting the needs of the whole student.

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Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19 on University Students in Underrepresented Groups: A Quantitative and Qualitative Descriptive Study to Assess Needs and Hear Student Voices

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Introduction

In the United States, fewer than 40% of full-time college students graduate within the four-year (intended) period for a bachelor's degree; increasing collegiate dropout rates are currently considered an epidemic (Velez, 2014). Underrepresented minority (URM) students (defined as African American, Native American/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino) have the highest dropout rates and thus are a group of special concern regarding the collegiate dropout epidemic (Musu-Gillete et al., 2017; Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2019). Persistent racial disparities exist in higher education and contribute to the high URM dropout rate. Many URM students do not have the same access to resources and lack the support systems needed to be successful at the collegiate level compared to other students (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Additionally, URM students at traditionally white colleges often report hostile campus racial climates, and associated impacts to their sense of belonging and collegiate success (Gusa, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Obtaining a higher education not only increases one's economic gain but having a higher education has other benefits as well. Adults with a college education generally have better health outcomes than those who do not, such as reduced levels of mental health conditions/illnesses, learning/physical disabilities, chronic diseases (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Montez et al., 2012; Schnittker, 2004), and live longer (Zajacova & Montez, 2017).

The response to COVID-19 has caused widespread societal disruption worsening the collegiate dropout epidemic. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on March 11th, 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). In response, universities around the world abruptly switched from in-person to remote, online instruction to reduce COVID-19 transmission (Viner et al., 2020). A recent survey of undergraduate students at Arizona State University found 13% of students were delaying their graduation, and 11% of students had withdrawn from classes since the start of the pandemic (Aucejo et al., 2020). The impact COVID-19 campus closures have had on college students is in the early stages of investigation. However, in addition to dropout, early evidence indicates increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in U.S. college students since the start of the pandemic almost one year ago (Son et al., 2020). Barriers to adequate Internet and technology include online instruction challenges, increase in distractions, and a decrease in motivation. These challenges were expressed more prominent among non White, female, and first-generation college students (Gillis & Krull, 2020). It is clear that COVID-19 is having a large impact on collegiate learning, but more research is needed to understand how URM students specifically are being impacted considering they are already at elevated risk for attrition (Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2019).

Research is needed to identify educational barriers associated with URM given the distance-learning and generally less-predictable learning environment created by the COVID-19 public health emergency (Aucejo et al., 2020; Gillis & Krull, 2020). This information is needed by college administrators and educators to develop policies and interventions to reduce disproportionate barriers to learning and appropriately distribute resources to provide a more equitable college experience for all university students. Campuses where students perceive a more equitable college experience have more social integration (Hurtado, 2007), and better educational outcomes (Umbach & Kuh, 2006), and thus campuses can improve equity for collegiate success which, in turn, could lead to improved lifelong health outcomes for URM students (Phelan & Link, 2015).

This study uses quantitative and qualitative methods to uncover student experiences at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to answer the following research questions:

1. During distance-learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, what academic, social or family, and financial challenges are URM students experiencing? How does the frequency of reported challenges by URM students compare to those reported by students who are not URM?

2. How do students perceive university actions taken in response to the pandemic: what were the main student concerns at the end of the first semester of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Method

Study Setting

The study site was a midsized Western public university that offers undergraduate, graduate, and medicine programs in Nevada. On March 12th, 2020, the Governor of Nevada declared a state of emergency due to COVID-19: over the next week he ordered all schools and non-essential businesses to close and asked residents to practice physical distancing. The university announced they would transition to remote, online learning through the end of the Spring semester on March 23rd and closed all buildings on March 27th. The data for this study were collected from May 4th-15th, 2020, when the university's campus was closed to students and remote learning was in use, statewide social distancing mandates were effective, and limited low transmission risk businesses were allowed to reopen with restrictions on May 15th.

Study Design

An online cross-sectional survey design using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) was implemented. Students aged 18 years or older and currently enrolled at the university were eligible to participate. A random sample from the student directory was used to invite 1,570 students to participate. The student directory is a data frame with extremely low coverage error: it contained email addresses for 96.2% of all students enrolled during the survey period (Spring semester 2020). The sample size calculation was based on a desired power of 0.80, 95% confidence, an effect size of 0.2, and an expected response rate of ~50% (Porter et al., 2006). The sample included graduate and undergraduate students. The invitation email explained that participation was voluntary, anonymous, and the general purpose of the study; the first two questions of the survey asked participants to verify their age and willingness to participate. This study had approval from the university's Institutional Review Board.

Measurements

This study used novel questions. We conducted informal cognitive interviews with family, friends, and colleagues prior to survey administration to ensure clarity and precision of the novel survey

questions. The survey was exploratory in nature and examined many aspects of how COVID-19 was impacting students personally, academically, and professionally, as well as questions about how students were responding to various impacts of the pandemic. A subset of survey topics was used to examine quantitatively and qualitatively what occurred to students at the beginning of COVID-19 induced distance learning. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously using the survey method described. The quantitative data were used to answer research question one and the qualitative data were used to answer research question two.

Research Question One: Quantitative Component

Survey sections used for the quantitative component of this study included: students' race, remote learning experience, proximity to individuals with/at risk of COVID-19, and changes in family obligations. The independent variable was students' race and was measured by a survey question that asked students to select all that apply for their race (options included White, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino[19], Native American/Alaskan Native, African American, and other). To construct the variable of URM students, we pooled students who classified themselves as of Hispanic/Latino, Native American/Alaskan Native, and/or African American descent (i.e., multi-racial students were included as URM if they reported one of these; Musu-Gillete et al., 2017; Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2019). All students who did not meet criteria to be considered URM were pooled as the reference group.

We examined the impacts COVID-19 induced distance learning had on students using dependent variables that were measured with a series of questions focused on impacts to students' academic, social or family, and financial lives. Questions on students' academic lives included: *"Has the transition to online learning negatively impacted you?"*, *"Are you concerned with impacts on GPA?", "Have you been able to meet assignment deadlines like you normally would?", "Do you have a functional/effective workspace in your residence?",* and *"Has there been an increase in distractions?".* The questions on students' social or family lives included: "*Have you experienced an increase in family duties that have caused a negative impact on your course work?*", "*Do you know anyone who had contracted COVID-19?*", "*Do you live in the same household as the person who contracted COVID-19?*", "*Do you know anyone who has a risk of being impacted from COVID-19 (e.g., older in age or with existing conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular/heart disease, etc.*)", and *"Do you live in the same house as someone who is high risk?"*. The questions on students' financial lives included: "*Do you struggle with having Internet access?"* and "*Have you struggled with not having the necessary electronic devices (i.e., laptop)*?". All questions were dichotomous with "yes" or "no" options. Statistics were conducted using SAS software (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA). Descriptive statistics were calculated for the dependent variables to compare the URM students with the reference group. For the dependent variables, the mean percentages for URM students and reference group were compared to examine any differences that exist.

Research Question Two: Qualitative Component

To answer the second research question, we asked students if they were satisfied/unsatisfied with the university's response to COVID-19 using the following prompt: "*On March 23rd, 2020, [the university] announced that they would transition to online instruction through the end of the spring semester. [The university] closed all buildings on March 27th. The deadline to withdrawal from classes was extended to April 10th. A notice was sent to students in dorms that they must move out by March 25th. Students are being given the choice to either receive letter grades or*

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[19] Hispanic or Latino was classified as race as research finds that two-thirds of Hispanic U.S. adults consider their Hispanic background as part of their racial background (Parker et al., 2015).

"Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory" marks for the Spring, 2020 semester. Please answer the following questions: Are you satisfied with the measure taken by [the university] for controlling the COVID-19?". Students who answered they were dissatisfied were asked a follow-up open-ended question as to why they were unsatisfied. Responses were used to characterize sources of student dissatisfaction regarding the university response to COVID-19. Authors one and two individually coded the responses and performed an inductive approach to analyze the data. This was done by using the data to construct codes and themes (Hennick et al., 2013). The researchers used an iterative process to agree upon the coding that emerged and to finalize a codebook to use. The finalized codebook contained 16 codes. Using the codebook, the researchers classified four themes for the codes: monetary concerns, communication, learning environment, and size/focus of response actions. Both coders agreed on what was the most illustrative quote for each code.

Results

A total of 193 surveys were returned resulting in a response rate of 12.2%. For the quantitative component, 11 surveys were removed for not meeting inclusion criteria and missing data: one was removed for not being 18 years or older and 10 were removed for not answering any of the questions to construct the dependent variable. This resulted in 182 surveys included for the quantitative component's analysis. For the qualitative component, eight surveys were removed: one was removed for not verifying eligible age, and seven were removed that had no answer to the question on satisfaction with the university's response. This resulted in 185 surveys. Overall, 142 (77%) students said they were satisfied with the university's response and were not included in the qualitative descriptions. There were 43 dissatisfied students (23% of the sample) and 40 out of the 43 (93%) students answered the open-ended question that asked why they were dissatisfied. The 40 responses to the open-ended questions were used for the qualitative component.

Research Question One: Reported Challenges by URM Students

Compared to the university's student body, our sample demographics are similar in the composition of age and class standing groups, but our sample was over representative of female (17.3% higher) and Asian (8.4% higher) students relative to the university (Table 1). At the university, 12.1% of students identify as URM students (Hispanic/Latino, African American, or Native American) and our survey sampled these groups proportionate to enrollment. Yet only 2.6% ($N = 41/1,570$) of students who responded to our survey were URM students.

When we compared the mean percentage of URM students to the reference group, we found URM students experienced higher rates of certain academic, social or family, and financial challenges. The mean number of academic challenges reported by URM students was higher than the reference group for having no access to an effective/functional workspace (39.0 compared to 33.3%) and for an increase in distractions (97.6 compared to 87.9%; Table 2). For the impact on students' social or family lives, more URM students experienced an increase in family duties that negatively impacted their learning/education (58.5 compared to 50.4%) and more frequently knew three or more people who have contracted COVID-19 (19.5 compared to 11.3%; Table 2). More URM students reported struggling more with accessing necessary electronic devices than non-URM students (19.5 compared to 13.5%; Table 2). In comparison, the reference group experienced higher rates of the following academic challenges: being negatively impacted by the transition to online learning (66.0 compared to 63.4%), concerned with impacts on GPA (62.4 compared to 53.7%), and unable to meet deadlines like normal (29.1 compared to 26.8%; Table 2). There were certain challenges experienced at similar rates between both groups. These challenges include knowing someone at high risk for contracting COVID-

19 (URM students: 92.7 compared to 92.9%) and struggling with internet access (URM students: 31.7 compared to 28.4%; Table 2).

Research Question Two: All Student Concerns

For each theme, the 16 codes were used to classify the 40 student responses. The student responses are representative of all students who were eligible for the study. Overall, there were 69 times that codes were used when analyzing the student responses and each student's response was represented in at least one of the codes. Table 3 shows the themes, and the total number of times codes were used when classifying student responses.

Theme 1: Monetary Concerns. The theme with the most times the codes were used (20/69) was monetary concerns. The two most used codes were: refunds for tuition and student fees (10/20), and housing refunds (6/20; see Table 3 for other codes that make up this theme). The quote that exemplified the refunds for tuition and student fees code was, "*Our tuition covers using the gym and other amenities of the university that we still paid for the semester even though we did not use it but that money was never returned to us*." The quote chosen for the housing refunds code was, "*There have been tremendous financial burdens put upon us because of how suddenly we were kicked out. The university did not want to pay us back money we were owed with housing until we fought back*." We separated refunds for tuition and student fees from housing due to the number of statements that fit the housing refund code. Additionally, the housing refunds code reinforced similar sentiments found in the short-notice evacuation code under the communication theme. One student remarked on the federal government's Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, stating "*My parents are well off, but it does not mean that because they are my parents, I am well off. I believe refunds should apply to students who have not applied towards FAFSA because ALL students are impacted. I do not qualify for FAFSA, at this time the CARES Act applies for students that have applied by FAFSA*". The CARES Act allocated funds to the university to provide financial support for students in need because of pandemic and the shift to distance learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Even though only one student mentioned the CARES Act, it is important to acknowledge this because the quote highlights a deficiency in the Act resulting in a form of inequity; not all who needed it had access to this resource.

Theme 2: Communication. The second most coded theme was communication (18/69 times codes were used). The two most used codes under this theme were: short notice evacuation in housing (9/18) and unsatisfactory expectations for students (5/18; see Table 3 for other codes that make up this theme). The quote that exemplified the short notice evacuation in housing code was, *"Moving out in 2 days? Yikes. That's hard for people with nowhere to go".* This quote refers to the university's announcement on March 12th, 2020 that students living in dorms should stay home and not return after Spring Break. The quote chosen for the unsatisfactory expectations for students was, "*COVID-19 had been very unpredictable, when all of the courses went online it made more work for students instead of helping students".*

Theme 3: Learning Environment. The third theme is the learning environment (13/69 times codes were used). The two most used codes for this theme were: lower quality of learning (5/13) and unfair grading measures (4/13; see Table 3 for other codes that make up this theme). The quote that exemplified the lower quality of learning code was, *"I feel my knowledge in my current subjects halted when we went to online. Zoom learning was awful and boring. I can't image if my 3 hour class did zoom lectures. I would've rather read a professors well thought out notes on the topics".* It is important to note that professors also received the same notice timeframe of the transition to remote, online learning. The quote chosen for the unfair grading measures code was, "*I feel that the pass/fail option for classes at (the university) was ineffective because students, like me, didn't have the option to*

pass/fail classes when they receive financial aide". The alternative grading option the student referred to is the option to receive 'Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory' (S/U) instead of the traditional letter grade.

Theme 4: Size/Focus of Response Actions. The final theme is the size/focus of the response actions taken by the university (11/69 times codes were used). The two most used codes for this theme were: wanting more resources (4/11) and too large of a response (3/11; see Table 3 for other codes that make up this theme). The quote that exemplified the wanting more resources code was, "*Although it didn't negatively impact me personally, [the university] should have allowed students to be able to access technology such as laptops. Domestic abuse and toxic home environments are real and they should have accommodated students on a case by case basis when it came to homing*". The quote chosen for the too large of a response code was, "*I don't think that we needed to shut down all of the [university] facilities such as the library and gym. This made it difficult to get physical exercise and to go somewhere with less distractions from roommates and loud people in my apartment complex*".

Discussion

Our study examined COVID-19 pandemic induced impacts on students' academic and personal lives during distance learning at an early point in the pandemic. While the distancing measures put into place by universities had an honorable goal of reducing the transmission of COVID-19, it may have led to unintended impacts on students, especially URM students. We examined racial disparities in impacts to academic, social/familial, and financial lives, as well as student concerns on university responses to COVID-19. There are four main take-a-ways from our findings: (1) URM students are experiencing some challenges more compared to other students at the end of the first semester of transitioning to online learning; (2) the reference group (non-URM students) report being more worried/concerned about the academic outcomes than URM students (i.e., GPA concern, unable to meet deadlines like normal) even though URM students report greater disruptions to their lives, (3) there were challenges equally experienced by all students; and (4) the majority of students who were unsatisfied with the university's response to COVID-19 stated student concerns surrounding financial reasons.

There were already existing racial disparities impacting URM student collegiate success pre-pandemic and the pandemic may be exacerbating those disparities. Pre-pandemic, URM students had the highest dropout rates (Musu-Gillete et al., 2017; Patterson Silver Wolf et al., 2019). It is important for more COVID-19 campus equity studies to take place during this time to work on creating interventions, and policies before these disparities worsen. Unsatisfied students reported monetary concerns the most and this may be exacerbated among URM students as URM were more likely to struggle with accessing the necessary electronic devices to be as successful in the online learning format. Additionally, URM students were more likely to be impacted by academic challenges like not having access to an effective/functional workspace and having an increase in distractions. All these challenges may be detrimental to a student's college career and to help retain as many students as possible, college administrators and educators should work to reduce the specific challenges students are facing. From this study, college administrators and educators could provide more access to renting equipment to students in need and having on-campus space designated for students who need a quiet work environment that is COVID safe.

There were some challenges felt by URM students and the reference group that were similarly experienced. Both groups struggled with Internet access (over 25% of each group) and this is important for college administrators and educators to consider. With the rapid transition to online distance learning and with ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, college administrators should investigate the reasons why students struggle with Internet access. Possible reasons could be due to

finances (not being able to afford Internet access or not being able to upgrade to a better Internet service) or the location of their home. These reasons could be remedied by offering financial assistance to students in need and by offering a functional work environment on campus that is COVID safe where students can access a functional Internet service. Having effective Internet access is a crucial tool to participate in online distance learning and having an ineffective Internet service can be detrimental to students' academic success. Additionally, both groups similarly reported knowing someone at high risk for contracting COVID-19 (over 90%) and living in the same house as someone who is high risk (over 30%). This is important to consider as a possible factor in the increasing rates of stress, anxiety, and depression in college students during this time (Son et al., 2020). Researchers should investigate if students who know someone at high risk and especially whether students living with someone at high risk are experiencing an increase in negative mental health outcomes.

It is important to note there was student concern regarding two mitigation strategies used by the university to address challenges students could be facing due to COVID-19 (concern over the 'S/U' grade option and the CARES Act). To help with the COVID-19 pandemic-induced impacts on academics, the university offered students the option to receive S/U (to be given 'S', undergraduate students need to have at least a D- or higher, and graduate students need to have at least a B- or higher) instead of the traditional letter grade. Receiving a 'S' grade is equivalent to a letter grade for the student to meet requirements for degree completion and successful course progression. It was found this option did not apply equally to all students and was particularly disadvantageous to those receiving financial aid. It is important that when university administrators implement mitigation strategies, they work to apply equitable strategies. If a strategy is not equitable, the university should work to implement other strategies that could help the students missed by the original strategy. This way the university is working to help all students.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the low response rate from URM students. One possible reason for the low response rate could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic induced impacts experienced more by URM students (i.e., difficulties with Internet access and struggling to have proper devices like a laptop). The COVID-19 pandemic induced impacts could have led to difficulties for URM students to partake in the online survey, which would make disproportionate impacts harder to detect because the students impacted the most would be missing from the sample. A second limitation is the relatively small sample size of the quantitative arm ($N = 182$) and focus on a single university, limiting generalizability of the findings. A third limitation is this study was developed to be exploratory and used coarse items to investigate topics of interest. For example, a more refined measure of the outcomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacts would improve future studies. Future studies could benefit from focusing on a singular outcome such as academic challenges and use measurements to capture the challenge. For instance, a future study could investigate whether higher use of the S/U option is associated with URM students and degree non-completion as a way to measure the impact of COVID-19 on academic careers and disparities in higher education. The results of this study should be interpreted as preliminary given the response rate, sample size, and coarse items.

Recommendations for College Administrators and Educators to
Promote Collegiate Success in URM Students

Universities should begin assessing the campus climate as experienced by URM students to determine how to create and maintain an environment that is responsive to the needs of all students

(Henry et al., 2011). This assessment should consider two important factors of college retention found to be especially important for URM students: academic and social integration (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) stressed these factors to be important for URM student retention because of the higher risk of URM students dropping out compared to other students. For academic integration, college administrators and educators could investigate how students perceive educators' concern for students and teaching. This study found some students reporting dissatisfaction that educators did not care about students during this time. It is important for educators to not only keep active communication lines open for students during a crisis like COVID-19, but to also show more leniency especially for students experiencing hardships. For social integration, college administrators and educators could consider aspects such as building student self-esteem, the strength of college students' peer relationships, and informal interactions between educators and students.

URM students were more likely to experience an increase in family duties that negatively impacted their education. To maintain retention, college administrators and educators should consider implementing strategies to build social supports for URM students to access. By building social supports this may help to ease the experience of family burdens. Perceived social support has been shown in research to work as a protective factor against collegiate dropout and stress in URM students (Dennis et al., 2005; Gloria et al., 1999; Wilcox et al., 2005). Research notes specific interventions that would benefit URM students: working with students to establish and maintain faculty and staff relationships, encourage students to feel comfortable and ask for help when needed, while receiving an education through a remote format working with students' families to educate the families on the academic rigor of the college environment, and create peer-mentor groups for students to partake in (Smith, 2010). Research suggests that when URM senior students share their college experience stories it may serve as a tool of empowerment for URM freshman students (Bauman et al., 2012). If college administrators and educators work to implement some of these strategies, it can help to change the current culture at the university to create a more equitable college experience for all students.

Conclusion

Our study provides novel evidence that URM students are experiencing certain COVID-19 pandemic induced impacts to their academic, social or family, and financial lives more compared to other students after the first semester impacted by the pandemic. These impacts may lead to detrimental influences on collegiate success, and interventions should be put into place to work to mitigate these impacts. This study provides novel evidence that both URM and non-URM students have concerns on how the university responded to COVID-19 and many of the concerns revolve around finances. The findings from this study are important because it can be used by college administrators and educators to begin preliminary work to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic induced impacts for all students and work to reduce the historical and ongoing racial disparities experienced by URM students. Higher education should continue to work to reduce these racial disparities to not only reduce COVID-19 pandemic induce impacts, but to reduce the collegiate dropout rate among URM students.

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Emotional and Mental Health Support for Black Students: Responding to Racial Trauma and White Terror Amidst COVID-19

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic presents many stressors for students, manifesting in increased levels of anxiety, depressive disorders, feelings of isolation, and suicidal ideations (Panchal et al., 2020; Serafini et al., 2020; Czeisler et al., 2020; Anderson, 2020a; Healthy Minds Network, 2020; Amour, 2020). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four young adults aged 18 to 24 had "seriously considered suicide" in June of 2020 (Czeisler et al., 2020). Responding to these stressors has led many colleges and universities to offer increased mental health services (Anderson, 2020a). Indeed, student mental health has been identified as a top priority by college presidents (Bauer-Wolf, 2019; Chessman & Taylor, 2019; The Steve Fund, 2020).

Yet, despite the increased awareness of the importance of student mental health support, adequate support services for students of color – and particularly Black students – are severely lacking on many college campuses. It has been known for some time now that students of color have greater unmet mental health needs compared to white students (Lipson et al., 2018). Addressing this gap becomes particularly important in the contemporary moment for two major reasons.

First, Black students and their families are disproportionately and more severely affected by COVID-19. Black students are more likely to contract the virus and to have a more severe case if they do (CDC, 2020). They are also more likely to have friends and family members who have contracted or died from the virus. As a result, they likely find themselves in situations where they take on additional roles in the home to care for family members who are ill or act as emotional support after the death of a loved one. Further, the negative economic effects of the pandemic have been disproportionately pronounced for Black communities. Black and other racialized Americans (especially Latinx workers) have experienced higher rates of job losses and pay cuts than white Americans (Lopez et al., 2020), and as a result, students of color are more likely to work odd jobs than their white peers to counteract financial insecurity at home.

Second, it is against this already difficult backdrop that students of color – and particularly Black students – are faced with the trauma and terror of racism and white supremacy. Students of color, and Black students in particular, have to live, work, and study in a racist society that repeatedly tells them that their lives do not matter. The public murder of George Floyd and the resultant protests highlighting wide-spread issues of police brutality, white supremacy, and systemic racism take a mental toll. As students are asked to perform well in their studies, they must also navigate systemic oppression, racism, injustice, and brutality. It is this reality, and the overall weight and toll of living in a racist society, that

may be experienced as "racial trauma." As Candice Nicole explains, "[r]acial trauma exacts a psychological and physiological toll on people of color" (Nicole, 2017, n.p.).

Many available support services disavow, fail to acknowledge, or have no adequate way of dealing with the collective experiences of racial trauma. Drawing on participant-observations in public information sessions on student-well-being and mental health support, this paper lists some commonly-recommended wellness and emotional support strategies and examines their utility and efficacy in supporting Black and other racialized students. We show that race-neutral or color-blind practices that do not take systemic racism into consideration are inadequate in supporting the racialized student body and may, in fact, exacerbate the problem. We argue that to be effective, mental health support and counselling services for students of color must be attuned to the realities of systemic racism and the ever-present dread of racial terror. We make the case for targeted support services that directly respond to students' experiences of racial trauma, provided by personnel who look like the students they are meant to serve, within a campus culture that seeks their empowerment. We provide several recommendations that allow for the decentering of whiteness and systemic racism in the institution while supporting the well-being of the Black student body (Table 1).

Table 1. *Recommendations to Support Black Student Well-Being*

Build Counselling Centers
● Hire BIPOC staff
● Train BIPOC staff
● Retain BIPOC staff
Foster an Anti-Racist Campus Culture
● Acknowledge Institutional Shortcomings
● Change Attitudes
● Create Empowering Spaces and Celebrate Black Life
● Participate in Ongoing Dialogue
● Invest in Institutional Change by Allocating Resources
Cultivate Relationships Beyond the Campus
● Invest in Student Outreach and Build Relations with the Students' Home Communities.

Context

Disproportionate/Racial Effects of Covid-19

COVID-19 does not affect us all equally. The racial disparities and politics of the nation are traceable along infection and death rates, with the virus disproportionately affecting racialized communities across the country.

Black Americans are 2.6 times more likely to be infected by the virus, they are 4.7 times more likely to require hospitalization, and they are 2.1 times more likely to die from the disease than white Americans (CDC, 2020). Further, while compared to the adult population, few children who have contracted the coronavirus have died from it (the fatality rate for children and teens under 21 hovers at roughly 0.03%), those who did die as of fall 2020 are disproportionally, and almost exclusively, children and teenagers of color (Bixler et al., 2020). Students of color, then, are at higher risk of contracting the virus, to fall seriously ill with it, and they are more likely to be faced with the reality of

a loved one falling ill or dying. This latter scenario results in students of color disproportionately having to fill caregiving roles at home.

Alongside the added burden of acting as caregivers, emotional support persons, and homemakers, the situation is exacerbated by worsening economic realities. The economic effects of the pandemic have been particularly pronounced for communities of color. Communities of color were economically insecure before the pandemic, with higher unemployment rates, lower incomes, and fewer savings than white Americans (Gould & Wilson, 2020). The pandemic has exacerbated already existing inequalities in the labor market. Latinx and Black Americans in particular have experienced higher rates of job losses and pay cuts than white Americans, while being overrepresented in jobs deemed "essential" – jobs that often come with high risk of exposure to the virus, health insecurity, and low pay (Lopez et al., 2020; Parker et al., 2020; Gould & Wilson, 2020).

The hardest hit workers are women of color (Modarressy-Tehrani, 2020). The unemployment rate for Black women (20-years and older) is one-fourth higher than the national average, and for Latinx women the jobless rate is almost 50 percent higher (Gould & Wilson, 2020). The fact that the loss of income is particularly pronounced for women of color further complicates life for many racialized students as they are more likely to live in single-parent households than their white peers (Gould & Wilson, 2020). Job-loss for a single-mother and single-income earner constitutes a financial blow for the family. It is important to be aware of this reality, for not only does it result in a more stressful home environment, but it also means that students of color are more likely than other students to work while taking classes full time.

Mental and Emotional Impacts

"Large-scale disasters, whether traumatic (e.g., the World Trade Center attacks or mass shootings), natural (e.g., hurricanes), or environmental (e.g., Deepwater Horizon oil spill), are almost always accompanied by increases in depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use disorder, a broad range of other mental and behavioral disorders" write Galea, Merchant, and Lurie (2020, n.p.; see also Neria et al., 2008). COVID-19 has had similar effects on the general population, including "generalized fear and pervasive community anxiety" (Serafini et al., 2020, p. 530). The disparate health and economic effects of COVID-19 translate into unequal mental and emotional burdens for communities of color. As the pandemic is made worse by endemic racism, and communities of color face higher unemployment rates, economic insecurity, health inequity, and heightened stress from working while risking exposure in "essential" jobs, the psychological toll on communities of color is greater than the general population. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has found higher levels of depression and suicidal ideations among Black and Latinx individuals than their white counterparts (Czeisler et al., 2020), and even higher rates of depression among essential workers than among those who are unemployed (ibid).

Racial Violence and Trauma

Racialized students live through a global pandemic coupled with a socio-economic crisis that disproportionately affects them and which has resulted in wide-spread and "profound psychological distress" (Serafini et al., 2020, p. 529) particularly in their own communities. Like any other student, they must adapt to college life during a pandemic and the difficulties associated with it, such as remote, hybrid, and/or socially-distant learning (which all come with their own sets of challenges). Like other students, they must battle feelings of isolation due to limited access to and disconnection from friends, family, and campus life.

Yet, unlike many of their peers, they must also navigate systemic racism and its daily reminders, through the flood of imagery via news and social media depicting Black bodies in pain. Living in an

unequal society as a target population takes an emotional toll. Living with systemic racism is tiring and exhausting. As one student put it during one of the sessions, "I honestly feel drained."

Constant reminders of racial injustice and racism are traumatic. Mental Health America (2020) defines racial trauma, or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), as "the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes" (n.p.). "Racialized trauma," they further explain, "can come as the result of a direct experience where racism is enacted on you," "transmitted intergenerationally," or "vicariously" (Mental Health America, 2020, n.p.; see also Helms et al., 2010). For example, "viewing videos of brutal police killings of Black people, such as the video associated with the murder of George Floyd, can cause traumatic stress reactions in the people who view them - especially in Black people" (Mental Health America, 2020, n.p.; Bernstein et al., 2020.).

Indeed, as one student put it during an impromptu teach-in the day following the grand jury's decision not to charge those responsible for the death of Breonna Taylor:

> You go online, or you turn on the news and there they are – the dead bodies of Black people. When they filmed George Floyd being killed… When Michael Brown was lying there dead in the street… for hours... these are the modern examples of the lynching trees. These are our present-day symbols of white terror. They are letting us know that this could be us. Wearing a hoodie or going for a run, or even just sleeping in your own bed, that is enough to kill us. And then they show these images, and we hear the stories every day, over and over… even now talking about this… That s*** is traumatizing.

The effects of racial terror are so far reaching that the Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture (ISPRC) at Boston College urges us to recognize "racial trauma" as "an urgent public health concern, having serious consequences for the mental health and well-being of Black, Indigenous, and other people of Color" (2020, n.p.).

Color-Blind Coping Strategies

What is largely missing from institutional responses is an acknowledgement of this reality. Our racialized student body – who is already hardest hit by the pandemic – also navigates endemic racism and white terror. "Understanding and addressing the mental health needs of racially diverse students is essential to supporting their success and creating equity in other dimensions, including persistence and retention," says Sarah Lipson from Boston University's School of Public Health (Samuels, 2018, n.p.). Yet, the emotional and mental health support services made available to them through institutions of higher learning are largely inadequate for they disavow the realities of racism or have no adequate way of dealing with them. Worse, race-neutral/white-centric institutional responses may cause further harm and exacerbate the problem.

Below we list some coping strategies and stress management techniques that were presented during an information session on improving student mental health during COVID-19 at a Primarily White Institution (PWI) during fall 2020. Alongside standard self-care suggestions (including listening to music, talking to friends, cooking a nutritious meal, etc.) it was recommended that students:

- *Go for a Drive.*
    In order to clear one's mind, it was suggested that students get in their car and go for a relaxing drive. Driving while Black, however, in not a relaxing experience. By now millions (Smith, 2017)

have watched the live-stream of Philando Castile, a 32-year-old Black man, fatally shot 40 seconds into an ordinary traffic stop by Officer Jeronimo Yanez (who was acquitted of all charges) in front of his girlfriend and her 4-year-old daughter. Worrying about being pulled over, interrogated, harassed or worse, does not calm one's mind.

- *Go for a Jog.*

   As a recommendation to those who do not have access to a vehicle, and in an effort to get students physically active, it was suggested to go for a jog or engage in similar activities outside of the home. While commonsensical and certainly not ill-intentioned, this suggestion nonetheless came mere weeks after the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man who was chased and killed while jogging. Having to think about the potential of being chased and harmed by a white mob is not relaxing.

- *Instruct Campus Police to Perform a Welfare Check.*

   In response to a concerned faculty member who asked how best to reach out to and support Black students who might be struggling, the answer was to "ask campus police to perform a welfare check." If it is feelings of comfort, support, and care that are meant to be evoked, then the appearance of uniformed police or security at the door of a student of color certainly misses that mark. Worse, it very likely has the opposite effect. While the presence of police may be comforting to white Americans, it certainly does not have the same effect on those racialized students who come from communities that are over-policed and whose community members disproportionately die at the hands of law-enforcement.

Such abstract and decontextualized support strategies are simply not good enough – perhaps not ever, but especially not now in this contemporary moment in which racial (in)justice is at the forefront of many peoples' minds. Bonilla-Silva (2020) reminds us that even though, and perhaps especially because, "they transpire in a mostly innocent, nice manner", "color-blind-infused discussions are dangerous" (1). This is because "colorblind racism–inflected discussions obscure how the problems at hand are worse for communities of color and may require race-based social policies to address them" (Bonilla-Silva, 2020, p. 2). Similarly, mental health support for racialized students that does not take racism seriously, indeed that does not center racial (in)justice and focuses on the empowerment of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students of color, is not only inadequate, but dangerous. It is dangerous because it perpetuates a culture of whiteness in the institution, marginalizing the non-white student body. Disavowing their realities means perpetuating dominant power structures. Perpetuating dominant power structures means that we are not only failing to support but, in fact, are causing further harm.

This reality was further left unacknowledged during the last suggestion:

- *Talk to a Counselor/Therapist.*

   Most importantly, the point was made that students contact the College's counselling center to set up an appointment to talk to a counselor or therapist on staff. However, for several reasons, students of color are far less likely than their white counterparts to heed this suggestion (Lipson et al., 2018). Simply put, mental health professionals have no history of doing good in communities of color. Historically, they were not readily available. Today, the profession remains white-dominated.

While Black Americans are as likely as others to reach out, the places they turn to differ. Historically, mental health spaces were not readily available to Black and brown communities whose well-being and survival depended on mutual assistance and self-reliance (Taylor et al., 2000). Often, Black faith communities have provided such resources – including mental health services – that were inaccessible to Black Americans through mainstream institutions (Taylor et al., 2000, p. 77). Alongside potential stigma attached to seeking mental health counselling, the same level of trust possessed by a pastor or deacon who is an integral part of one's community, has not been established with licensed mental health professionals. On the contrary, this relationship is oftentimes characterized by mistrust. Counselors/therapists do not always provide this same sense of safety. Still today, counselors and therapists are predominately white (Lin et al., 2018), leaving Black and brown people with very few opportunities and very little time to learn how to trust someone who looks like they might oppress you further. Black students, particularly at PWIs, struggle with social isolation and underrepresentation while facing racism from both their professors and peers (New, 2016; Anderson, 2020b; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Because counselling staff are predominately white, students of color feel similarly isolated and alienated by the very staff members who are supposed to help with those concerns (New, 2016).

In sum, while presumably well-meaning, decontextualized, and white-centric suggestions are tone-deaf to the realities of racialized students and, as such, may exacerbate the problem. Failing to take the students' racially-mediated realities into account, failing to understand that the students are navigating racial terror alongside all the other difficulties that white students face, failing to offer avenues to talk to people who look like them and who can relate, serves to alienate racialized students from their counseling and mental health support workers. As such, it is no wonder then that students of color make less use of campus-based mental health and counselling services than their white peers (Lipson et al., 2018).

Recommendations to Support Black Student Well-Being

To be effective, mental health support and counselling services for Black students must be attuned to the realities of systemic racism and the ever-present dread of racial terror. Race-neutral or color-blind practices that do not take systemic racism into consideration are inadequate in addressing the needs of racialized students. What is needed are support strategies that help our students survive and thrive, provided by people who look like them, in a campus community that is oriented toward racial justice.

We provide three overarching recommendations: First, build counselling centers with the well-being of racialized students in mind; second, foster a campus culture that promotes racial justice and equity; third, cultivate relationships and connections to diverse communities beyond the campus. Each recommendation contains several strategies to obtain the overall objective (detailed below).

1. Build Counselling Centers with the Well-Being of Racialized Students in Mind
- *Hire BIPOC staff.*
    Purposefully employ Black and brown personnel to increase representation in places of higher learning outside of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Counselling centers designed for and staffed by Black, Indigenous, and people of color fosters trust and a sense of belonging. Fostering trust is crucial if students are to use campus services. Students need access to diverse, culturally competent, racial trauma-informed mental health practitioners who are more likely to acknowledge, recognize, and understand their racially-mediated

realities - and who are thus able to suggest more appropriate (i.e. not white-centric or color-blind) well-being and support strategies.

- *Train BIPOC staff.*

    Educate and certify a diverse counseling staff on the history of racial trauma in Black and brown communities in order to ensure the cultural competence of the staff.

- *Retain BIPOC staff.*

    Implement retention and support strategies for BIPOC staff through ongoing training and support. Provide avenues for professional development and invest in the mental health of employees through, for example, a confidential employee assistance program, peer mentoring groups, workshops on practical resiliency techniques (The Steve Fund, 2020).

2. Foster an Anti-Racist Campus Culture

- *Acknowledge Institutional Shortcomings.*

    Openly confront systemic racism by acknowledging the flaws that are perpetuated by the institution; own up to mistakes and continuously strive to do better. For example, openly admit to the lack of cultural support services on campuses in order to invite change brought forth by students who are motivated to institute new programs and clubs that will benefit them.

- *Change Attitudes.*

    Get rid of stress factors such as implicit bias and racism in the school community through action-oriented training and education. Provide training materials to all faculty and support staff on recognizing the trauma experienced by Black and brown students on predominantly white college campuses. Provide campus-wide anti-racism, allyship, and by-stander training to faculty, staff, and student leaders. In addition, as suggested by the Steve Fund's Crisis Response Task Force (2020), create a safe, well-publicized, and accessible communication process through which students, faculty, and staff can report incidents, concerns, or issues related to campus climate to key administrators.

- *Create Empowering Spaces and Celebrate Black Life.*

    Racialized students are faced with daily messages and imagery of racial violence and injustice. This has to be counteracted. Racialized students need to know and believe that they *do* matter. It is our responsibility to help convey this message. What is needed are empowering spaces that celebrate Black life, or as Ezinwanne Odozor, student support specialist at the University of Toronto, so eloquently put it, "spaces in which Black students can dream themselves into the future" (2020, n.p.).

    Acknowledge, respect, and celebrate the diversity of Black cultures and backgrounds. Further, understand that racial and ethnic identities powerfully intersect with other identities, such as gender, socioeconomic status, immigration status, nationality, dis/ability, language, sexual orientation, age, religion, etc. As Audre Lorde has taught us, "community must not mean a shedding of our differences" (p. 112); it is about "learning how to take our differences and make them strengths" (ibid).

    Refrain from promoting an all-inclusive approach (e.g., multicultural Greek organizations; multicultural activities; multicultural celebrations) and support spaces for Black and brown students. Black and brown students are singled out for persecution and violence but are grouped with everyone for educational or celebratory purposes (i.e., everyone's history month; holiday seasons absent of Kwanzaa). Celebrate and acknowledge African American holidays, such as Juneteenth. This can give students a break from the negative happenings around them and allows them to feel as a part of the community. Not only will dedicated spaces provide emotional support, but they similarly improve academic

success. Research has shown that Black college student academic success, particularly at PWIs, positively correlates with involvement in Black student organizations (e.g., Black student governments, Black student unions, Black Greek letter associations, Black academic honors groups) (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010, p. 314).

● *Participate in Ongoing Dialogue.*

Implement an ongoing consultation process/communication strategy to hear and take into consideration the concerns Black students share and the ideas they provide, particularly concerning the creation of Black spaces and avenues for celebration. Provide a way for students to build a rapport with personnel on campus to help build connections and strengthen the community.

● *Invest in Institutional Change by Allocating Resources.*

None of the above recommendations will effect lasting change without ongoing commitment and resource allocation. As Stevenson (2020) put it,

> Racism is systemic, it is historic, it is tightly woven throughout our social fabric, and built directly into our bureaucracies. Thus, a path forward solution will only be found if those with the power to allocate our institutions' finite resources adopt an action-oriented agenda committed to dismantling and defunding all those initiatives and bureaucracies that serve to fortify the current structure. (n.p.)

This entails senior administration working with the campus community on an ongoing basis to identify gaps, assess existing initiatives, and implement new ones where they do not yet exist. This also includes ongoing quality assurance - to evaluate and assess the efficacy of these programs. If programs and initiatives underperform in their specific mandates, they must be improved or replaced.

3. Cultivate Relationships Beyond the Campus

● *Invest in Student Outreach and Build Relations with the Students' Home Communities.*

Attend college fairs in predominantly Black and brown high schools to build better connections prior to college visits. Establish and invest in partnerships with local faith communities, cultural organizations, government agencies, K-12 schools, activist groups, and non-profit organizations. Such efforts will build trust and lasting connections (The Steve Fund, 2020).

Conclusion

Black students (and their families) are hit hardest by COVID-19, they are hit hardest by the economic downturn, and they are forced to endure a cultural milieu that seeks their erasure. Alongside the health and economic effects of systemic racial inequality, racialized students are faced with the trauma and terror of racism and white supremacy in the form of police violence and hostility toward a movement whose message that "Black Lives Matter" is still dismissed by some.

As this nation continues to reckon with its roots in anti-Blackness, the need for support services that empower and uplift students of color – and in particular Black students – are urgently needed. This essay gestures toward more effective support strategies for black students in the hopes of improving student well-being overall. The following overarching recommendations are proposed:

● Employ, train, and retain black and brown personnel to help counsel and guide students who look like them.

- Foster an anti-racist campus community by acknowledging and addressing the institution's shortcomings, prioritizing spaces by and for students of color, and educating staff, faculty, and student leaders on systemic racism, interpersonal racism/implicit bias, and racial trauma.

- Build positive relations with the students' home communities.

It is the responsibility of educational leaders to invest in a more just tomorrow. Meaningful systemic change will occur only when institutions of higher learning re-orient themselves and commit to dismantling the racist and colonial systems upon which they are built. This entails taking care of the well-being and mental health of our students while changing normative power structures and shifting institutional climate and culture.

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Healthcare Students Perceptions of Hybrid Learning in the Midst of Twin Pandemics

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Introduction

Face-to-face learning has been a higher education practice in the United States for centuries. For example, higher education evolved at Harvard in 1636 by the Puritans (Lucas, 2006). As early as daycare and pre-K, the education system in the United States is designed for students to have face-to-face interactions with their peers and teachers and an instituted learning schedule. As students move into higher education, face-to-face interactions and learning schedules persist. Many students are accustomed to a face-to-face learning environment and an established learning schedule; therefore, changing the dynamics of their learning format can create mixed emotions.

Learning dynamics were changed to an online education response in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic began to appear on many college campuses. This online education response was initiated by several prominent institutions, and other institutions followed by mid-March (Crawford et al., 2020). The online learning format was designed to be either synchronous or asynchronous. Many universities allowed faculty to use either design. On one hand, some faculty chose to use a synchronous learning environment which allows learners to use technology to interact in real time and receive instant feedback. On the other hand, some faculty implemented an asynchronous learning environment which enables learners to use technology at their leisure and discretion.

Neither synchronous nor asynchronous online learning is a novel concept, but more focus has been given to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) of online learning because most higher education learning has been facilitated online since March. In 1995, a study that was conducted by Wheatley and Greer outlined the benefits to online learning. The results of the study concluded that the primary benefit of online learning was saving travel time for both students and faculty. The results of the study also showed that teaching costs could be reduced because the same instructor could teach online courses on different campuses and instructors could also cater to a wider audience of students online (Wheatley & Greer, 1995). In a more recent article, strengths to online learning included time flexibility, location flexibility, wide availability of courses and content, and immediate feedback (Dhawan, 2020). Online learning being commonplace for some universities can be considered a strength. Universities that are designed for a totally online learning format and universities that have thrived in the midst of epidemics and natural disasters are more accustomed. Some examples include Southern New Hampshire University which is completely online and Southern University in New Orleans, Louisiana which converted to an online learning format after Hurricane Katrina to accommodate students who had been displaced (Omar et al., 2008).

Weaknesses to online learning include the following: technical difficulties; the learner's capability and confidence level; time management; lack of personal/physical attention or lack of face-to-face

interaction with the instructor; response time; absence of traditional classroom socialization; cost/too expensive; signals availability/strength problems; and distractions. Another major weakness to online learning is the psychological factors, such as stress, anxiety, depression, and confusion, that students and faculty face. These psychological factors can lead to the lack of focus and concentration (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Dhawan, 2020).

Opportunities and challenges should also be considered when assessing online learning. Opportunities to online learning include scope for innovation and digital development, designing flexible programs, users can be of any age, an innovative pedagogical approach, and strengthen skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, and adaptability (Dhawan, 2020). Lastly, challenges to online learning include unequal distribution of Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, quality of education, digital illiteracy, digital divide, and technology cost and obsolescence (Dhawan, 2020).

As stated, with the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, many colleges and universities faced an abrupt change from face-to-face learning to a mostly online learning environment. This abrupt change had implications for learners in all areas of higher education. But for learners in programs that require a clinical component, the change had far reaching, and in some cases, deleterious consequences. An example of the manner in which the clinical component was negatively impacted was given in a report from the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy (ACAPT) National Consortium of Clinical Educators. The report indicated that "91% of programs had students removed from or unable to begin a clinical experience, and 86% of programs reported that they had students whose graduation would potentially be delayed due to circumstances related to COVID-19" (Clinical Educator COVID-19 Report, 2020).

Tabatabai (2020) suggested that the COVID pandemic could impact students' exposure to specific clinical conditions and impact clinical rotations and competency assessments. One specific clinical condition is the treatment of orthopedic patients. Because many healthcare facilities postponed non-emergent outpatient visits and limited visitors and non-essential personnel, many clinical rotations and hands-on training for health care professional students were canceled (Gagnon et al., 2020).

Many medical and allied health programs have utilized alternative learning environments as a complement to traditional learning (Gomez, 2020). Pre-COVID-19 learning strategies included virtual reality simulation (Tabatabai, 2020), simulation, flipped classroom (Gomez, 2020), experiential learning, and practical assessments of clinical competence including clinical reasoning exercises, case presentation narratives and self-reflection activities (e.g. portfolios/log diaries) (Quinn et al., 2020). While these strategies complemented the face-to-face instruction, they did not replace the hands-on techniques that are commonly found in clinical education.

The absence of the hands on, face-to-face components of clinical education along with changes in clinical fieldwork rotations has caused stress and anxiety in students in medical programs and allied health programs including athletic training, occupational therapy, and physical therapy (Gustafsson, 2020; Lyons et al., 2020; Quinn, 2020). Quinn et al (2020) suggested that the educational changes may result in an increase in stress due to the increase in the volume of online meetings, emails and the struggle to establish boundaries in the new reality. Lyons et al. (2020) found that students were not only grieving the loss of peer interactions, co-curricular activities, and social activities, but they were also having difficulty motivating themselves to learn without personal connections. Gustafsson (2020) suggested that virtual patient simulations are anxiety producing for OT students and that the switch to online learning put students who did not have computer and internet access in the home at a disadvantage, especially if universities and public libraries that typically offered options for access were closed or unavailable due to COVID. Gustafsson also discussed students' challenges with time management, motivation, and feelings of isolation as a result of the switch to online learning. Gomez

(2020) suggested strategies to address mental health issues for students including designing optimum learning environments, developing supportive learning habits, actively engaging in the learning process, practicing self-advocacy in matters concerning participation in the learning process, and maintaining communication channels and networks with peers and instructors.

Unparalleled events have occurred across the United States and worldwide due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (Litam, 2020). For some faculty and students, this time was not only a transition from face-to-face instruction, but a transition of uncertainty of how their lives may be impacted. The COVID-19 pandemic health disparities and inequities have become a reminder of how life as a minority American is driven by structural racism (Evans, 2020). People of color who have historically had decreased access to healthcare either due to their social economic status or immigration status. Persons who are undocumented also faced unique challenges with seeking to obtain medical assistance without associated fears (Litam, 2020).

Simultaneously, many are becoming more aware of the disproportionate impact of police brutality on the African American population (Vince, 2020). As protests were on the rise, Covid-19 was still an infection outbreak plaguing the world. Social distancing was impeded in areas of marginalized minorities and immigrants who are poor and possess two or more pre/coexisting conditions (Evans, 2020). The community most at risk filled frontline jobs in healthcare, emergency response, and transportation which cannot be done remotely and are minimum wage positions not compensated for the risks incurred (Evans, 2020). As such, these same individuals have a higher chance of exposure to the COVID-19 virus due to close contact with the public or other workers but are not paid for sick days (CDC, 2020).

Although many universities and medical centers showed solidarity with racial justice protests by holding momentary campus gatherings, health care organizations, providers, and academic centers should consider how their actions, management, attitudes, and ignorance of the realities that mold the lives of minority populations contribute to the disparities in health (Evans, 2020). As patient-centered care health professionals, similar attention or discussion may have been beneficial in the classroom or during clinical rotations to aid in cultural humility.

The disproportionate death rate by COVID-19, and the systemic targeting and murders by an organization designed to "protect and serve" was highlighted through increased media coverage, heightening the vulnerability of Black Americans (Lipscomb & Ashley, 2020). Both COVID-19, and racism will affect students, staff and school communities as schools reopen (Combe, 2020). The direct or in-direct impact of racial injustices and COVID-19 related deaths can be traumatic for some. Trauma-based disorders including acute stress disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder have parallel symptoms as the effects of racial trauma (Litam, 2020). Individuals and communities have been traumatized leading to a lifetime of physical and mental health outcomes for Black and Brown people due to the safety and security threatened by the public health crisis of racism (Combe, 2020).

The results from a study by Mailizar et al. (2020) suggested that research should be conducted on the opinions of students regarding challenges and opportunities associated with online learning. The purpose of this study was multifocal. This study explored student perceptions of hybrid learning in Athletic Training, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy Programs at a medium sized southern university. This mixed methods study examined the impact of the twin pandemics (COVID-19 and Racial Justice and Equity) on didactic and clinical education for students in Athletic Training, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy Programs at a public university in the southern region of the United States. This study also aimed to compare and contrast student perceptions of hybrid learning and the impact of the twin pandemics on didactic and clinical education across health care disciplines.

Method

A questionnaire/survey was created by the primary researchers and validated by an expert in higher education. The questionnaire/survey was placed in Qualtrics (a survey tool) for anonymous distribution. An email was created outlining the details of the study. Details of the study included the due date, informed consent, an estimation of completion time (20-30 minutes), and the survey link. Investigators in the Athletic Training (AT), Occupational Therapy (OT), and Physical Therapy (PT) Programs distributed the email to recent graduates and every student who was enrolled in the athletic training (AT), Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD), occupational therapist assistant (OTA), Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), and physical therapist assistant (PTA) Programs during the twin pandemics. Investigators distributed the emails on two occasions: when the study had been approved by IRB and two weeks after the first distribution. Once all of the surveys were completed, the information was exported from Qualtrics into an Excel Spreadsheet. The data was grouped according to qualitative and quantitative data. The data was then analyzed. Frequency distributions were used to analyze quantitative data. Information was grouped into themes for qualitative data analysis.

Results

The survey was distributed via email to 365 current students and recent graduates in the combined programs. A total of 65 students, AT (7), OTD (10), OTA (10), DPT (34), and PTA (4) completed and returned the survey (17.8% response rate). The grouping of students according to age is as follows: 40 students between the ages of 18 to 24, 21 students between the ages of 25 to 31, and four students between the ages of 32 to 38. Fifty-one females and 14 males participated in the study. Ten Black/African American and 55 White students participated. Of the 65 respondents, 51 were single, three lived alone, and four reported having at least one child. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were first generation college students, and 69% experienced an online environment prior to their experience in their respective programs.

Quantitative data analysis was completed using SPSS version 27 and qualitative data was analyzed for emerging themes using Delve. Themes emerging from the qualitative data included education in the midst of COVID-19, the impact of changes in clinical education, and students' response to racial injustice.

Education in the midst of COVID-19

With COVID-19, many universities adapted learning to accommodate the necessary changes. Adaptations included face-to-face classroom learning with COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions, hybrid learning that included face-to-face and online segments, and an online learning format only. The results of this study indicated that the majority of students enjoy a face-to-face learning environment. Within the face-to-face environment most students reported that sound was audible even when the instructor was wearing face coverings, such as masks and/or shields. Almost all students felt as if they had a safe place to work/learn while completing online learning. The majority of students reported that they were able to manage their study time. Students also reported that they had technology in place to support an online learning environment and they had sufficient internet capabilities. Students reported that not only did they have understanding professors who remained in contact with the class, but they also indicated that their families were supportive of their online learning.

Over 78% of students reported that the coronavirus had a negative impact on their educational performance. Over half of the students reported that transitioning to online learning during COVID-19 was chaotic, they did not have time to organize their studies, and they were distracted by people or

other things, such as technology, television, social media, and pets. Few students noted that classes were able to be switched to the online learning format with minimal changes.

Student comments on the survey supported their quantitative scores. While one student reported that the "lack of class in person negatively affected my focus and my level of enjoyment in regard to studying and attending lectures," another student stated, "I learn better in person also so online lectures are hard for me to retain." Class activities, such as labs, were reportedly difficult as one student stated, "Covid-19 made it difficult to learn hands on skills where labs are necessary." Several students reported that distractions in the home environment negatively impacted their learning and their ability to engage in the learning process. While one student stated, "It was very difficult to learn from home with so many distractions around" another said, "I had my children to teach at home while I was taking online classes during the spring and summer" and a third student reported, "I feel less engaged in classes and with my teachers despite trying to actively participate to keep myself engaged." Several students reported that organization was difficult and that they "spent more time trying to determine what is due when, what lectures need to be watched, and overall trying to stay organized than I have been studying and learning."

Impact of Changes in Clinical Education

Even though 60% of the students reported that the coronavirus negatively impacted their clinical education, a low percentage (26.1%) of the students reported clinical site closure. Less than 44% of the students indicated that their clinical education was cut short or hours were reduced due to COVID-19. For those who did report site closure, the students felt that the closure, while necessary, did negatively impact their ability to learn in the clinical site. While one student stated that clinical site changes "caused me to spend less time with patients," another reported, "I didn't have much clinical experiences due to the social distancing." A third student stated, "I was not as confident going into my clinical rotations." Other students stated, "my last clinical rotation was cancelled which severely altered my research" and "it caused a lot of anxiety and fear that carried over into my performance in fieldwork prior to it getting cut short."

Some students did report that in spite of the circumstances they were able to learn. While one student stated, "my clinical site partially closed which resulted in very limited observation of the typical context, but I was able to remain on site and continue my work," another student stated, "It was a challenge but overall, I do not think it was a detriment. I believe that there are positives to gain from it." A third student reported, "my clinicals were cut short, and the majority of my last rotation was teletherapy, which is beneficial now with my job and the way things are now, but I still would have liked to finish clinicals hands-on." Lastly, a student summed up both the positives and negatives of the COVID-19 impact on clinical education by stating "My clinical rotation was altered, and telehealth was implemented to treat patients, however, rotations were completed, and I was able to learn new skills."

Student's Response to Racial Injustice

Only six percent of students experienced racial injustice and less than five percent of the students participated in marches/protests against racial injustice during COVID-19. Over 61% of the students found the political environment (COVID-19 and racial injustice discussions) to be distracting to their education; therefore, over half of the students avoided watching news broadcasting. Several students reported an impact on their education. While one student stated, "It was on my mind a lot during the spring/summer and minimally affected my ability to stay focused on my studies," another student stated, "My newfound realization of the blatant atrocities that Black Americans face made me feel

constantly sad and worried and coupled with COVID-19, it was hard to pay attention to my studies. I was also scared to participate in marches and protests because of COVID-19 and fear of police."

Many students felt that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting quarantine made the racial issues more visible. One student reported:

> I felt as though all the joys of life had been taken away. There was no safe place to turn to take your mind off of what was going on. You turn the news on, you see what's going on, you get on social media, you see what's going on, you talk to family & friends you discuss what's going on. It was an endless cycle of emotional turmoil with no end in sight. You couldn't even be by yourself because your mind would play everything you had heard and seen from the day. To sum it up, it was a lot.

Another student stated, "I believe the quarantine gave people the time to share their experiences, do the necessary research, and educate each other on the racial injustices in our country."

The twin pandemics have not only affected the physical health of students (23%), but the pandemics have also impacted the mental health of students. For example, a student reported, "My anxiety was definitely heightened during the pandemic and with the addition of all the racial injustice. I am proud that more people started to speak up/listen, but it got a little too much for me to handle (especially with negativity/social media added to the mix)."

Discussion

Education in the midst of COVID-19

Unlike the results of a study that indicated students prefer distance education, students reported that they prefer face-to-face learning (Hannay & Newvine, 2006). The abrupt change to an online environment was unsettling and presented difficulties for many students. Although some positives emerged from the educational transition including support from family and faculty and adequate/appropriate technology to support the transition, there were negatives that also emerged. Many students felt that the transition to online learning was difficult and chaotic. Many reported not having enough time to organize their studies after the switch while others reported that the change in delivery of course materials, such as labs, made learning the content difficult. Students also reported that distractions within the home environment had a significant impact on their education. Reports of having to educate their children while trying to attend online classes, decreased motivation to attend online classes, and the lack of peer interaction all interfered with the learning process. This concurs with Dhawan's (2020) findings on the weaknesses of online learning. Dhawan found that learners capabilities and confidence level, time management, distractions, frustration, anxiety, and confusion all impacted student learning. These findings are also similar to the findings of other authors. Lyons et al. (2020) reported challenges in achieving remote delivery and students having difficulty with the loss of peer interactions and motivating themselves to learn through distance education. Sud et al. (2020) found that 60% of students perceived that the online mode of teaching was not as interactive as classroom lectures. Gustafsson (2020) also reported student challenges with time management, motivation, and feelings of isolation from the online learning environment.

Impact on changes in clinical education

Athletic training, OT, and PT students were not only impacted in the classroom by COVID-19, but students were also affected in clinical settings. While in the clinic, some students reported difficulty

learning because of COVID-19 guidelines, and others reported that they were able to learn via telehealth and other telecommunication. Students were also affected because of clinical site regulations that were imposed after the onset of COVID-19. For instance, students reported being removed from their clinical site. Even though students were removed from their clinical site, every student in each program was able to graduate as scheduled.

Educational response to racial injustice

Students experienced racial injustice not only in their personal lives but professionally impacting their mental and emotional health. Clinical work can be emotionally exhausting and cumbersome for Black clinicians while dealing with the burden of navigating a dual pandemic while practicing (Evans, 2020).

Although the pandemic was still present students participated in marches/protests to show their solidarity to racial injustice. Many in the US are in transition to the second stage of Noel Burch's stages of adult learning, conscious incompetence, recognizing the problem and committed to change through continuous protesting and dialogues (Vince, 2020). While students participated to be a change agent in protests there was a lack of dialogue in the classroom setting. Vince (2020) noted that identifying a broader solution to the issues facing our nation and profession will not be achieved by protests alone.

Students identified that the political environment was distracting to education although it was not presented clinically or in class. The racial injustices of 2020 coupled with the sociopolitical history of race relations in the United States can now longer be glossed over as done previously (Lipscomb & Ashley, 2020). Just as the delivery of education has transformed to an online platform. Healthcare delivery has transformed through the implementation of telemedicine. Recognizing the barriers for minority populations, the digital divide may exacerbate the disparities in healthcare access and quality (Evans, 2020). Some students were able to participate in the telehealth practices, while professions such as athletic training, were unable to utilize telemedicine for continued care due to patient limitations.

The students indicated racial issues had become more visible during COVID-19. The perfect explosion was created in our society when COVID-19 was coupled with racial unrest and has led to the disregard of African American people at all levels of society due to oppression and White supremacy (Lipscomb & Ashley, 2020). The unrest also created an increased concern for safety through the Twin-Pandemic. We must acknowledge the inability of Black individuals to escape the racialized trauma inherent in witnessing the unarmed murders of Black Americans while attempting to stay safe, healthy and alive during a pandemic (Lipscomb & Ashley, 2020). Before the next pandemic occurs, addressing the contribution of social and historical racism must be a pillar for the future (Owen et.al, 2020).

Limitations

There are a few important study limitations to note. These limitations include a small response rate and non-random selection. The study participants were selected from the AT, OT, and PT departments from one university. Programs represented included Associates level, Masters level, and Doctoral level from the same university. The small response rate and non-randomization may limit the generalizability of the results to other universities or to universities that do not have all three programs. Another limitation was the fact that recent graduates may not check their emails or feel that there is an incentive for completing the study/survey. Also, the authors utilized the last known email address for recent graduates which may not have been the correct address. A third limitation was the lack of face-to-face interaction to request that current students complete the study. This inability to remind students face-

to-face may have impacted the number of students who completed the study. Future research should be conducted on the opinions of faculty. Research on faculty opinions might enlighten others on issues that faculty face during the twin pandemics. A final limitation is that some students were recruited in classes taught by the researchers. Having researchers as instructors could have impacted student responses, as students may have believed their responses could influence their course grade. All of these factors impact the generalizability of the results to other universities.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the twin pandemics impacted the AT, OT, and PT students at this university. Because these are considered unprecedented times that have involved abrupt changes in education and in the delivery of education, students and educators have had to adapt to the changes quickly to avoid interruptions in the educational process. It is uncertain how long these changes will last and which of the changes will have a lasting impact on the learning process.

Based on the results of this study, the researchers have reached several conclusions. First, educators should participate in professional development courses and training that promote alternate assessment of learning using technology but that does not compromise student learning outcomes. For example, professional development courses can include instruction on pedagogic design and on the use of alternate learning management systems which focus on virtual delivery systems. Second, this pandemic presented opportunities for students to participate in a different method of patient care, telehealth/telecommunications. Prior to the pandemic, students in each disciple practiced face-to-face patient care delivery. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, responses to racial issues revealed deficits in cultural sensitivity that were identified in various communities by the unwillingness to communicate due to not understanding how to navigate critical conversations in times of distress. It was evident in students' responses that they would have appreciated at least an acknowledgement of the injustice from professors or authority figures; however, due to fear of responses, conversations regarding injustice did not occur.

The authors recommend that educators are trained with the tools to be equipped to deliver course material face to face and online. It is recommended that universities include telehealth/telecommunications modules for students in standard curriculum. As such the inclusion of cultural humility/competency training for faculty and students is recommended within clinical education curricula to aid increased patient-centered care. Opportunities to participate in book clubs and other forums, which describe how to effectively teach online can be made available to faculty. Educators can facilitate virtual discussions on ways to be successful in online instruction. Administrators should also encourage faculty to incorporate collaborative teaching and practice methods in the classroom and in clinical settings. Future studies should focus on how hands-on labs and other active learning can be integrated and taught in online learning. There are also opportunities to consider developing pedagogy/andragogy based on online learning and higher education needs.

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Come and Talk to Me: An Exploration of Culturally Responsive Communication and Decision-Making Practices at Predominantly White Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

Cultural responsiveness in higher education has been controversial since postsecondary institutions were founded (Gasman & Hilton, 2012). Prior to the Civil War, public policy often prohibited higher learning for Black students. Black students were generally denied admission and enrollment into traditionally White colleges (Donahoo, 2006). This artifact of racism contributed to the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), colleges founded prior to 1964 for the express purpose of educating Black postsecondary students (Palmer & Brown, 2020). Since the Civil Rights Era, demographics at traditionally or predominantly White institutions (PWIs), postsecondary institutions in which White students account for more than 50 percent of enrollees, have shifted over time to include more students of color (Bourke, 2016). While PWIs have been heralded for having leadership that has adeptly navigated cultural and social changes, HBCUs have been routinely criticized as monolithic institutions that lack strong and qualified leadership (Freeman & Palmer, 2020).

To be sure, the twin pandemics of racism and COVID-19, which have disproportionately affected people of color (Lieberman, 2020), created unprecedented uncertainty for higher education. As the administrators of postsecondary institutions made and communicated decisions about how to safely support student learning for the Spring and Fall 2020 semesters, it is unclear whether they did so in a way that was culturally responsive to students' experiences and needs.

Existing frameworks for culturally responsive decision-making suggest its potential for developing and advancing inclusive, sustainable, and equitable postsecondary learning environments (Bottiani et al., 2017; Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011). Through enhancing culturally responsive communication, such as including students in the information cultivation and dissemination process, postsecondary institutions can establish the "fit" between students' home and campus experiences, reinforce students' positive perceptions of the cultural competency of the institution, and empower students to develop their social, political, intellectual, and emotional identities (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

This deductive qualitative study explored how PWIs and HBCUs made and communicated decisions about closing and reopening campus during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of students of color. The purpose of the study was to understand the extent to which students of color at PWIs and HBCUs perceived differences in communication and decision-making strategies from their respective campus senior administrators. The following research question was investigated:

RQ: How did PWI and HBCU students' perceptions differ regarding decisions made and communicated about campus closing and reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to what effect?

This study contributes to the literature on how race can influence perceptions of culturally responsive communication and decision-making at postsecondary institutions by utilizing a qualitative research approach to explore how students of color at PWIs and HBCUs view leadership practices at their respective institutions.

Literature Review

While PWIs were formed to educate White students, demographics at these institutions shifted over time to include more students of color. Conversely, HBCUs were expressly designed to educate Black students (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Though HBCUs have sought culturally responsive input and teamwork from their Black students and faculty since their inception, demographics have shifted at both institution types, particularly at PWIs, and implementing cultural-competency discourse and decision-making efforts has become a priority at both (Kruse et al., 2017).

As postsecondary institutions are experiencing rapid adaptive challenges, such as demographic changes and the COVID-19 pandemic, educational leadership and social justice literature suggest that effective postsecondary administrators should emphasize the larger mission, vision, and values of the organization; share leadership throughout the organization; represent and elevate diverse voices, and understand the lived experiences of stakeholders when making and communicating change management decisions (Capper & Young, 2014; Klaus & Steele, 2020; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In the following, several theories for making and communicating change in postsecondary environments are summarized.

First, considering a stakeholder perspective when exploring organizational change acknowledges that postsecondary institutions have varied relationships with internal stakeholders, such as students or faculty, and external stakeholders, such as alumni (Amey, 2006). Student stakeholders have a range of expectations of their respective institutions. While some expectations can be accommodated, others cannot. Postsecondary institutions should be conscious of the span of student expectations and how to acknowledge those expectations (or not) when forming and implementing organizational change initiatives. In addition to students, other internal and external stakeholders also have a range of considerations they expect the institution to recognize and address.

Postsecondary leadership often decides whose expectations are prioritized by (a) identifying the primary and secondary stakeholders; (b) clarifying stakeholder expectations and goals; (c) determining the importance of stakeholders' goals and expectations; (d) reviewing the relationship of stakeholders' goals and expectations to the change initiatives; and (e) deciding if, how, and when to communicate with stakeholders and on which issues (Krick et al., 2005). For example, organizations may engage in systems or top-down changes when responding to external stakeholders. Conversely, institutions may leverage bottom-up changes when internal stakeholders are prioritized (Freeman et al., 2007; Lozano et al., 2016).

Second, organizational inertia or negative responses to change from internal stakeholders may occur when undergoing change initiatives, which may cause the organization to respond proactively through anticipating resistance or reactively, after the change has gone into effect (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

Third, academic management and leadership practices may highlight differences in leadership goals and ideals, requiring one model of governance to be prioritized over others (Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2013; Sewerin & Holmberg, 2017). For instance, postsecondary institutions experiencing change

often choose between addressing "hard" obstacles, such as organizational systems, policies, and processes, or "soft" concerns, like social-emotional wellness and campus culture (Huy, 2001; Matthews, 2009). When external stakeholders are elevated, "hard" organizational change initiatives are designed while "soft" elements are the focus when internal stakeholders (e.g., students) are the primary stakeholder.

Last, leaders may consider their proximal associations with external and internal stakeholders when designing change processes through prioritizing trusting or controlling relationships (Neves & Caetano, 2006). Disruptive changes, such as the sudden displacement of students on campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, can instill a sense of fear and anxiety. As postsecondary institutions respond to concerns, acting quickly, decisively, and unilaterally demonstrates control over the change process, while engaging stakeholders (e.g., students) in the decision and communication process may contribute to forming and reinforcing trusting relationships through stakeholders having some agency in the change (Pearse, 2010).

Conceptual Framework

Using the literature summarized, a conceptual framework from Pearse (2019) and its exploration of organizational change initiatives was adapted to guide this study (illustrated in Figure 1). This single framework incorporates three theories for making and communicating decisions regarding disruptive change. The first theory highlights "hard" changes that emphasize top-down control, and the second theory explains "soft" changes that promote collaborative communication and decision-making to build trust. The final theory integrated the first two theories as some decisions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic response, may necessitate both top-down control and collaboration.

Propositions. Building from the conceptual framework, the following propositions (detailed in Figure 1 using arrows) were identified to examine the research question:

- Proposition one (P1): Postsecondary institutions that identify external stakeholders as their primary stakeholders are more likely to respond to their concerns through selecting a "hard" change.

- Proposition two (P2): Postsecondary institutions that identify internal stakeholders as their primary stakeholders are more likely to respond to their concerns through selecting a "soft" change.

- Propositions three (P3): Postsecondary institutions that select a "hard" change in response to external stakeholder concerns control the change and the relationship.

- Propositions four (P4): Postsecondary institutions that anticipate resistance to a "hard" change from internal stakeholders respond by selecting a "soft" change.

- Propositions five (P5): Postsecondary institutions that select a "soft" change build and reinforce trust with students.

- Propositions six (P6): When postsecondary institutions build and reinforce trusting relationships with students, students feel like their social-emotional wellness and personal safety are being considered and that they were given agency over the change.

- Propositions seven (P7): Postsecondary institutions who control both relationships and change enable students to feel like their social-emotional wellness and personal safety are being considered and that they were given agency over the change.

Figure 1. *Conceptual framework for postsecondary decision-making and communication*
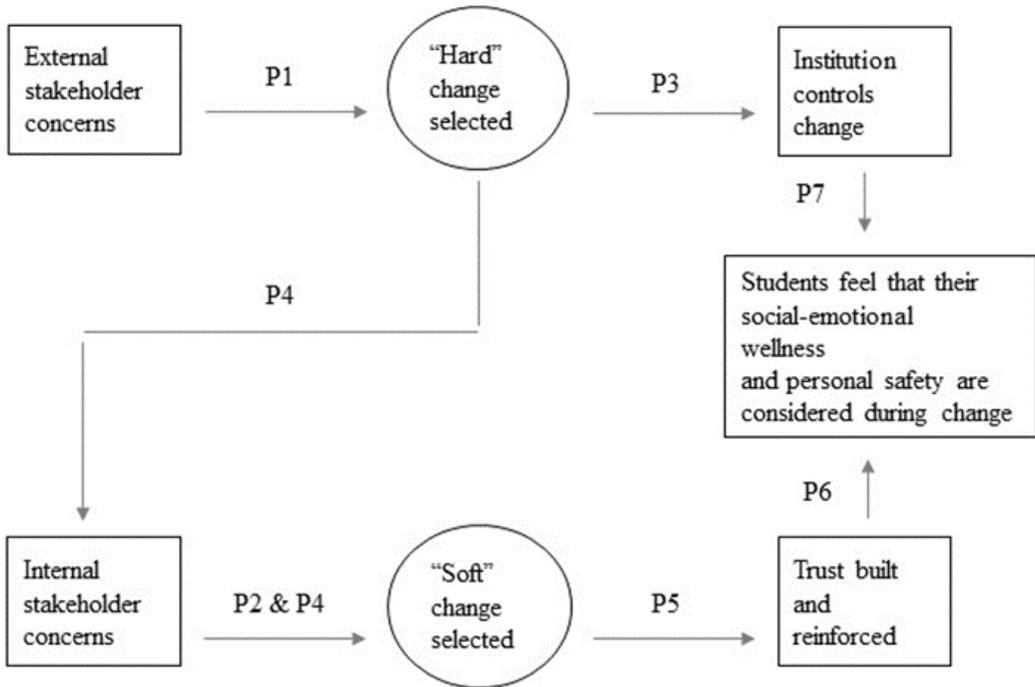
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PWIs may be more likely to align with the first theory (P1 and P3), making "hard" changes that emphasize top-down control, while HBCUs may be more likely to align with the second theory (P2, P5, and P6), making "soft" changes that promote collaborative communication and decision-making to build trust. As PWIs are in the beginning stages in prioritizing student stakeholders through addressing resource, access, and opportunity gaps for students of color at their institutions, PWIs may be more likely to prioritize external stakeholder concerns, such as trustees and donors, and therefore, may act unilaterally in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to control the change process (Galloway et al., 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morrison et al., 2008). Conversely, HBCUs may be more likely to prioritize internal stakeholder concerns, such as students, citing them as one locus of power, and therefore, may engage stakeholders in the decisions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic (Lumby, 2019; Latta, 2020; Han et al., 2014).

Because the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated major changes to postsecondary institutions' education delivery and students may be resistant to these changes, PWIs and HBCUs are expected to strive to integrate both "hard" and "soft" changes, with differing results (P4 and P7). PWIs and HBCUs may strive to solicit feedback from students when making decisions (P4). However, it is anticipated

that HBCUs may be more successful in soliciting feedback from students because they traditionally prioritize internal stakeholder concerns (Apple, 2016; Scott & Hines, 2014) and thus ought to be able to control both relationships and change in making decisions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (P7), which may help students feel like their social-emotional wellness and personal safety are being considered. It is anticipated that PWIs may not be able to accomplish this goal given their previous prioritization of external stakeholder concerns, which may have diminished students' trust in the institutions (Valverde, 2003).

Method

This study used deductive qualitative research through thematic analysis to explore the methods of decision-making and communicating at PWIs and HBCUs[1]. Thematic analysis is an approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes or patterns within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2011). Thematic analysis is a valid, reliable, and flexible method for examining qualitative data that can be adapted to meet the needs of many studies while providing detailed and complex descriptions of the data (King, 2004). This approach is a valuable way to investigate the varied perspectives provided by research participants through summarizing key concepts, reporting comparable and divergent viewpoints, and uncovering unexpected insights (Nowell et al., 2017).

Sample

The analytic sample was students of color who were enrolled in either a PWI or HBCU as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior in Spring or Fall 2020. Students of color was defined broadly as any student who identified as non-White. Students were identified to participate in the study through personal relationships with the authors. After identifying roughly 20 students to participate in the study, ten were purposefully selected based on the postsecondary institution attended and year in school to ensure a diverse sample (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Ultimately, eight of the ten purposefully selected students participated in the study. Table 1 provides sample demographic and institution inform

Data Collection

Interviews formed the primary data source for this study. The first author performed four interviews with students who attended HBCUs and the second author performed four interviews with students who attended PWIs. Interview protocols were designed to understand students' perceptions of how postsecondary institution administrators made and communicated decisions. Responsive interviewing was used to allow for flexibility in changing questions in response to what was learned (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Sample interview questions included, "What decisions did administrators make in response to COVID-19?" and "To your knowledge, do you believe students' thoughts or opinions were included in these decisions? Why or why not?" Interviews took place via Zoom during September and October 2020.

Following the interviews, the authors employed triangulation to check and establish validity of student responses by reviewing postsecondary institutions' COVID-19 response plans (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Each postsecondary institution had a dedicated website outlining their COVID-19 response, resources available to students and employees, and the process employed for making decisions regarding COVID-19. Data gathered from the postsecondary institutions' COVID-19 response plans aligned with student interview responses.

Table 1. *Sample demographic and institution information*

Participant	Institution type	Race/ethnicity	Carnegie classification	Public/private
1	PWI #1	Latinx	R1	Private
2	PWI #2	Southeast Asian	R1	Private
3	PWI #3	Black	R1	Public
4	PWI #4	Black	M2	Public
5	HBCU #1	Black	R2	Public
6	HBCU #2	Black	R2	Private
7	HBCU #3	Black	R2	Public
8	HBCU #3	Black	R2	Public

Source: Carnegie classification obtained from Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (n.d.).

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This study received approval from McREL International's Internal Review Board.

Coding Strategy and Data Analysis

Within deductive thematic analysis, this study used pattern matching to detect whether the propositions were accurate and to search for counterexamples that would better explain decision-making processes at postsecondary institutions (Almutairi et al., 2014; Gibbert et al., 2008; Guest et al., 2011). Modeling a pattern-matching procedure proposed by Yin (2011), this study took the following steps to explore the research question: (a) describe the theoretical propositions prior to data-gathering, (b) generate a codebook based on the theories, (c) collect data, (e) code the data using the codebook and identify counterexamples not present in the codebook, (f) compare the theories using the data collected, and (g) record the instances in which the data "hits" and "misses" the theories.

For the application of the pattern matching procedure, this study proposed three theories: the theory of "hard" change, the theory of "soft" change, and the theory of integration (detailed in Figure 1; Pearse, 2019). The "hard" change theory was operationalized across two codes: (a) top-down restructuring and (b) external expectations. The "soft" change theory was operationalized across three codes: (a) bottom-up restructuring, (b) student expectations, and (c) student engagement. The integration theory was operationalized across three codes: (a) resistance, (b) top-down restructuring, and (c) student expectations. These codes made up the original codebook.

Using Dedoose, authors coded interviews to identify themes in participants' responses that (a) aligned with the original codes and (b) provided counterexamples (Yin, 2011). First, a random sample of 25 percent of responses from each data source were selected to be independently coded to ensure inter rater reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Coded responses with an interrater agreement of less than 0.80 were discussed and reconciled as needed. Using the agreements established, the second author coded the remaining portion of the interviews. The first author then reviewed the codes and recorded discrepancies. Discrepancies were discussed until coders reached 100 percent agreement. In addition to the original codes, four counterexample codes, where proposition expectations did not align with participants' responses, were identified. Table 2 details the final codebook for the data, including definitions for original codes and counterexamples.

Table 2. *Final codebook for postsecondary decision-making and communication*

Code	Theory of "hard" change and control	Theory of "soft" change and trust	Theory of integration	Counter examples
Top-down restructuring	Administrators communicate changes without seeking students' opinions.		Administrators communicate changes without seeking students' opinions.	*Clear communication:* During Spring 2020, clear communication about changes inspires trust in students. *Instability*: Changes in plans make students feel untrustworthy of administrators' decision-making.
External expectations	Students feel that changes are meant to meet the needs of external stakeholders, such as financial stability.			
Resistance			Administrators communicate changes for students to provide feedback.	
Bottom-up restructuring		Administrators communicate options for students to choose from, giving them a say in the decision.		*Limited time:* Due to the nature of the pandemic, there is limited time for bottom-up restructuring in Spring 2020.
Student expectations		Students feel that changes are meant to meet their needs.	Students feel that changes are meant to meet their needs.	
Student engagement		Administrators invest time to conduct town halls and surveys where students can share their opinions before a change is made.		*Broken trust:* Students find engagement activities to be disingenuous or feel like they are not being taken seriously.

Note" Code descriptors are discussed in the row aligning with the code.

After the coding process, the theories were examined using the data collected and instances were recorded in which the data "hit" and "missed" the theories. Instances of "hits" and "misses" for the theories were recorded separately for PWIs and HBCUs and then results were compared. A proposition was recorded as being a hit if an operationalized code for the proposition, such as top-down restructuring for proposition 1, was identified amongst at least three of the four PWI or HBCU participants, and there was not a counterexample to contradict the code identified. Tables 3 and 4 provide a summary of the hits and misses for PWIs and HBCUs. In the lower section of the tables, the number of hits for the theories is recorded.

Findings

This study proposed three theories postsecondary institutions may use to make and communicate decisions regarding disruptive change: (a) the theory of "soft" change and trust, (b), the theory of "hard" change and control and (c) the theory of integration. Findings revealed that PWIs and HBCUs grappled in similar but distinct ways in making and communicating campus closing and reopening decisions to student stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, students perceptions differed considerably by institution type. Findings are reported separately for each theory. With each theory, findings for PWIs and HBCUs are compared.

Theory of "Soft" Change and Trust
Soft change was evident in the form of (a) bottom-up restructuring, where postsecondary institutions communicated options to students to choose from, (b) student expectations, where students felt the changes met their needs, and (c) student engagement, where town halls and surveys were

Table 3. *A record of hits and misses for predominately-White institutions*

Code	Propositions						
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Top-down restructuring	Y		Y				Y
External expectations	Y		N				
Resistance				N			
Bottom-up restructuring		Y*					
Student expectations		Y				N	Y
Student engagement					N	N	
Total hits for "hard" control theory [P1 & 3]	2		1				
Total hits for "soft" control theory [P2, 5, & 6]		2			0	0	
Total hits for integration of theories [P4 & 7]				0			2
Key: Y = unanimous confirmation of the proposition; Y* = proposition confirmed in all but one case; N = proposition contradicted							

conducted to collect student opinions. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, PWIs scored a 2 for the theory of soft change, while HBCUs scored a 5. Soft change was most evident in Summer 2020, when postsecondary institutions took time to identify student needs in preparation for Fall 2020. Efforts toward soft change did not occur in Spring 2020, likely due to the need for rapid changes in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, this section focuses on data regarding Summer 2020.

In Summer 2020, both PWIs and HBCUs strove to take a bottom-up approach to making changes for the Fall 2020 semester. Each postsecondary institution, except for one PWI, decided and communicated to students that they would have options in how they could attend courses, either in-person or asynchronously. PWI and HBCU students responded positively to administrators giving them choice. In discussing reopening options, a PWI student explained, "They decided [on] 90% remote and 10% in-person classes. They emphasized the importance of providing housing for students, and dorms were open to all students who wanted to live on campus. I liked the options."

In making these decisions, PWIs and HBCUs engaged students through surveys and conducted town halls to gather information about what students wanted their learning to look like in Fall 2020.

Table 4. *A record of hits and misses for historically Black colleges and universities*

Code	Propositions						
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Top-down restructuring	Y		Y				Y
External expectations	Y*		N				
Resistance				N			
Bottom-up restructuring		Y					
Student expectations		Y				Y	Y
Student engagement					Y	Y	
Total hits for "hard" control theory [P1 & 3]	2		1				
Total hits for "soft" control theory [P2, 5, & 6]		2			1	2	
Total hits for integration of theories [P4 & 7]				0			2
Key: Y = unanimous confirmation of the proposition; Y* = proposition confirmed in all but one case; N = proposition contradicted							

While these surveys and town halls were designed for students to share their opinions, students in PWIs responded differently to these efforts in comparison to students in HBCUs. In discussing the town halls and surveys, a PWI student shared, "That kind of [gimmicky] stuff I think really has shut me off to feeling like the administration listens, 'cause it's just a [public relations] thing. They aren't listening to us . . . they're listening to the checks."

By contrast, in discussing the same types of efforts, an HBCU student stated, "After [administrators] heard what the students wanted. . . they basically gave us two options. . . . So for us to have options, to me it means they listened to us."

There was a clear difference in how PWI and HBCU students responded to administrators' efforts to engage students. PWI students viewed engagement efforts as disingenuous, while HBCU students

believed that administrators listened to their concerns and strove to meet their needs. Engagement efforts broke trust in the administration among PWI students yet built trust in the administration among HBCU students. PWI students were less likely to feel that administrators placed their interests above external interests leading up to Fall 2020, even though they had been given choices in how they wanted to attend their courses. Conversely, HBCU students came away from a similar experience believing that their institutions were looking out for their interests.

Theory of "Hard" Change and Control

Hard change was evident in the form of (a) top-down restructuring, where postsecondary institutions made changes without seeking students' opinions, and (b) external expectations, where students felt that changes were meant to meet the needs of an external force, such as financial stability. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, PWIs and HBCUs scored an equal number of hits (3) for the theory of hard change. Though hard change was universally implemented in Spring 2020, hard change implications were most evident in Fall 2020, when postsecondary institutions changed their decisions after publicly considering soft change initiatives; therefore, this section focuses on data regarding Fall 2020.

While PWIs and HBCUs strove to build trust with students and communicated changes that gave students choices throughout Summer 2020, these communicated changes were altered prior to the start of Fall 2020. About a month before the Fall semester started, each postsecondary institution, except for one HBCU and one PWI, altered its plans for providing in-person courses and dorms for all students who wanted to live on campus. In discussing this change, an HBCU student explained, "They announced through emails [two weeks before school started] that we weren't going back [in-person]. And everybody was really upset because that's kind of short notice. Living in a dorm is expensive and people had already bought things."

As shown by this student, the sudden top-down restructuring resulted in students feeling negative toward administrators' decision-making. Further, students felt like their needs were no longer being considered and administrators were instead responding to external expectations, such as financial stability. In discussing administrators' motivations for sudden changes, a PWI student shared, "They're thirsty for money...They really don't care. They just want somebody to cut them a check. They were saying, 'We're going to freeze this, freeze that,' and [didn't] do any of that."

Because changes were made on such short notice and contradicted previous communication by administrators, students felt as though the institutions' financial stability was being placed above students' interests to safely resume in-person living and instruction. This resulted in students feeling mistrust toward the hard changes made by the institutions.

Theory of Integration

Integration was evident in the forms of (a) resistance, where postsecondary institutions suspected resistance from students and therefore asked students for feedback on proposed changes, (b) top-down restructuring, and (c) student expectations. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, PWIs and HBCUs scored an equal number of hits (2) for the theory of integration. There were no instances where students from PWIs or HBCUs shared that administrators asked students for their feedback on a proposed change; therefore, resistance was not identified in the data. The theory of integration was most evident in Spring 2020 when postsecondary institutions rapidly made changes in response to the COVID-19 outbreak; therefore, this section focuses on data regarding Spring 2020.

To protect students' health and safety at the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, PWIs and HBCUs implemented top-down restructuring by unilaterally sending students home and moving courses online in March 2020. Students received communications via email explaining that the institution was

changing organizational structures to ensure that students' health and safety were protected. In discussing these changes, a PWI student stated, "They sent us an email that said, 'We're going to send you home and this is how we're fixing everything and making sure that we're going to finish remotely.' There were grading and housing accommodations for students. I was happy that they did that."

As COVID-19 was spreading, administrators took decisive measure to protect students and clearly communicated these changes to students. In addition to making courses virtual, institutions also made special accommodations for students, such as grade adjustments to finals and housing for students who were unable to return home, to help them transition. These accommodations helped student feel a sense of trust toward administrators. In discussing how administrators responded, an HBCU student shared, "I think the administration responded the best they could. I feel like everybody...was confused. They were telling us it was a very serious disease and that we have to take precautions and be safe."

Because students believed that administrators were "trying their best" to keep everyone safe, students did not feel like the changes being made were meant to meet external expectations. Instead, students believed that administrators were looking out for their interests by communicating information that would keep students safe. Students' trust was built further when PWI and HBCU administrators refunded unused meal and housing dollars to students. An HBCU student explained how her institution handled the refunds, "I feel like it was handled well. We left school mid-March and then we all got . . . a stimulus [through the college] because [we] didn't qualify for an actual stimulus [through the CARES Act]. They took money off our bills."

By making decisions promptly, clearly communicating them, and refunding students' meal and housing dollars, students trusted that administrators were looking out for their interests during Spring 2020 even though administrators were making hard changes.

Discussion and Conclusion

Data from this study shows that organizational responses to change and their subsequent communication at PWIs and HBCUs are varied and may be characterized by the influence of internal stakeholders, namely students. The study identified three theories that may be reflective of effective leadership practices. The first theory denoted "soft" change and trust, characterized by bottom-up restructuring that provided voice and choice to students when selecting and communicating organizational change; recognizing and acknowledging student expectations; and implementing student engagement strategies that collect student feedback on how to respond to adaptive and disruptive change. HBCU students were far more likely to respond positively to "soft" changes: The communication and decision-making efforts that incorporated student engagement methods and recognized student expectations for personal and scholastic safety not only met their needs but also built enduring trust in the institution to address their personal and academic concerns. Conversely, students attending PWIs, with students finding these efforts disingenuous, met these strategies with skepticism. These findings confirm the original assertion that HBCUs would be more likely to successfully implement soft changes than PWIs.

The second theory focused on "hard" change and control, which includes top-down restructuring without seeking input from students and responding to external factors, such as financial stability. Implementing hard change at the onset of the pandemic in Spring 2020 was welcomed by PWI and HBCU students. Nevertheless, as institutions began to publicize "soft" change in Summer 2020 through reopening, instructional, and housing strategies after seeking student input and subsequently reneged on those "soft" change strategies in Fall 2020, students at PWIs and HBCUs felt mistrust in their respective colleges, stating that their colleges were prioritizing financial stability above student

wellbeing. As PWIs and HBCUs implemented hard changes, these findings conflict with the original assertion that PWIs would be more likely to implement hard changes than HBCUs.

The third theory integrated "hard" change and control with "soft" change and trust through anticipating and reacting to potential student resistance to change, implementing top-down restructuring, and acknowledging and responding to student expectations. When PWI and HBCU leaders acted decisively and prioritized student physical and financial well-being, students accepted change with no resistance. Because PWIs and HBCUs successfully integrated hard and soft changes, these findings conflict with the original assertion that HBCUs would be more successful at integrating changes than PWIs.

While scholarship has highlighted leadership challenges at HBCUs (Esters et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016), this study acknowledges that HBCU leadership was more attuned to the needs of students and built trust with their student stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic than their PWI counterparts. Through promoting positive and healthy relationships with students, engaging in collaborative approaches, responding to diverse voices, and being responsive to students' fiscal concerns, HBCU leadership demonstrated leadership efficacy (Ezell & Schexnider, 2010).

The factors students in this study identified as contributors to effective communication and decision-making are salient characteristics that may support successful navigation through changes that are less disruptive than postsecondary demographic shifts and public health pandemics for several reasons. First, this study provides an anti-deficit approach to Black institutions and the communication and decision-making strategies they employ, highlighting the positive leadership practices at HBCUs. Second, the findings provide additional context for using culturally responsive leadership strategies across institution types. These strategies may strengthen leadership capacity at PWIs as they experience ongoing demographic shifts that reflect a more diverse student body with varied and competing needs as well as serve as a model for sustainable leadership practices at HBCUs.

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Rooted in Resilience: A Global University Responds to Twin Pandemics

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Webster University is an institution with a distinctive history and mission. Founded in St. Louis, Missouri in 1915, the site of our main campus, Webster serves students in metropolitan and military locations across the United States as well as through traditional, residential campuses in Europe, Asia, and Africa. True to Webster's founding as one of the first institutions west of the Mississippi to address gender inequities in access to education, this University has continued to expand the diversity of students who enroll and graduate from Webster in St. Louis and around the world. Webster's leadership for assuring both access and success for a diverse student body is rooted in its commitment to meet unmet needs and to "leave no one behind" throughout communities it serves globally and locally.

Webster's global presence provides a singular perspective on the twin pandemics. In addressing the varied manifestations of underlying economic inequities and their impact on members of our community, we have implemented specific strategies and tactics with our colleagues and collaborators to arrest the compounded negative effects of the twin pandemics. Our experiences have identified: (a) the necessity of a systemic and integrated approach to managing the twin pandemics; and (b) the presence of an adequate organizational structure which facilitates coordinated activity among vital divisions of the University system: academics and overall operations; communications; advancement; and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In this case study we explore how this integrated and proactive approach alleviated the negative impact of the twin pandemics at the level of our University system and offer some guidance on how the crises can be managed going forward.

As the first word of the impending COVID-19 health threat emerged, Webster's response was based on the facts that the presence of different resource endowments (human and material) and distinct organizational infrastructures required a rapid and coordinated action across the entire system. The quick mobilization, decisive actions and systemic approach were aimed to contain outbreak within Webster's communities with the special focus on its most vulnerable segments. Early involvement of the diversity, equity, and inclusion division reflected our understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate economic and racial inequities and that our corrective measures must account for and address these inequities.

Tapping Our Strengths as Leaders

As leaders at Webster, we bring complementary backgrounds and perspectives to our individual roles and to the increasingly close-knit teamwork we enjoy and that the twin pandemics require.

As chancellor of Webster University, Elizabeth (Beth) J. Stroble serves as the principal leader for Webster's global university system, developing strategy and engaging external audiences to grow the

University's impact and reputation. The president and chancellor work in close partnership to lead the University's strategic vision. The units with whom her office works most directly include: Advancement; Board Operations; Community Engagement; Global Marketing and Communications; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); and Special Events. The Office of DEI was launched in 2013 with the appointment of Webster's first Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) who reports directly to the chancellor and sits on the President's Council.

Consistent with Webster's history of expanding access and success for increasingly diverse student populations, in the past decade the University has purposefully increased donor-funded and institutional scholarship funds for targeted student populations, achieved funded support for programs that address equity gaps, and gained regional and national reputation for results achieved in social mobility for underserved populations. As a result of initiatives and investments in achieving global academic and operational excellence, Webster has risen in the ranks from 33rd to 15th among Midwestern regional universities. Globally, Webster has opened doors for students to achieve a Webster education by establishing new campuses in Greece, Ghana, and Uzbekistan. First launched in the 1990s, the University's online programs have expanded access through synchronous and asynchronous offerings at undergraduate and graduate levels.

The president of Webster University, Julian Z. Schuster, leads all aspects of the organization's global operations and oversees the execution of the overall strategy. In partnership with the chancellor, Board of Trustees, senior leadership, and with the input of the Webster community, the president determines major strategic initiatives, assures efficient and effective deployment of resources, and makes sure global operations are aligned with vision, mission, and institutional values. The president leads the team of senior executives who manage core operations of the University: Academics, Finance, Enrollment Management, Information Technology, as well as overall Global Operations.

In close partnership with the chancellor, the president has led the University through a decade of transformational change, optimizing the size of the University's nation-wide network of educational sites and campuses, increasing Webster's global footprint, launching numerous new market-sensitive academic programs and quality improvements which resulted in a number of professional accreditations, and increased funding from government agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health, as well as from private donors.

Joining Webster University in October 2018, Vincent C. Flewellen serves as Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and reports directly to the chancellor. Working collaboratively and serving on the President's Council, he provides key leadership for the University's core value of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of the educational mission through the University's network of domestic and international locations. The Office of DEI supports the various schools and departments and their respective units but works particularly closely with the Offices of Admissions; Human Resources; Advancement and Alumni Relations; Global Marketing and Communications; Student Affairs and the Multicultural Center & International Student Affairs.

Addressing the Challenges and Seizing the Opportunities

Adopting a Proactive Approach

In March 2020 as the world's attention riveted on the novel coronavirus, Webster's leadership mobilized to balance the felt urgency for action with the need to gather accurate information and provide space for deliberation and engagement**.** The starting point in setting priorities lay in engaging and consulting with key stakeholders in order to create a common vision for health, well-being, security, and safety of all constituencies. This was key for implementation effectiveness. Webster University, as a global and horizontally aligned system, faced tremendous challenges in addressing

legislative and regulatory differences across its network of campuses within the United States and globally. In order to address these challenges, the cross-sectoral coordination body was established along with the criteria for assessing and prioritizing actions. The broadly defined criteria focused on: (a) saving human lives;(b) efficiency and effectiveness; and (c) equity and fairness. These individual criteria were ultimately aimed toward achieving and maintaining sustainability and vibrancy of the University.

The Webster experience in addressing COVID related challenges clearly identified some important points: (a) a need to develop an organization specific rather than generic (copy-cat) approach; (b) an awareness that achieving an efficient and effective approach is inseparable from the underlying issues of equity and fairness; (c) realization that the valid approach to any crisis, is one rooted and aligned with the principal values of the institution as well as the real circumstances in which the organization operates.

As a result, the president immediately created and charged the COVID-19 Task Force in March, followed by the Task Force on Transition and Adaptability in May, as the umbrella steering group to oversee three working groups:

- The Safety, Security & Communications Working Group
- The Transition to Campus-Based Operations Working Group
- The Academic Continuity & Support Working Group

Each of the working groups was composed of faculty and staff members and led by administrators with specific responsibility for public safety, finance, academics, and enrollment management. Colleagues represented the breadth of University constituencies, with access to public health officials and guidance locally and globally[20]. These groups met almost daily in spring 2020, continuing throughout the summer and fall, employing a variety of communications channels to provide frequent, detailed guidance for members of the Webster community and to respond to questions and inquiries from within the community and from public media.

For students and employees, the COVID-19 pandemic presented both direct and indirect impacts on the overall required costs to the University. Direct impact can be measured by the direct increased costs in securing a safe and secure environment, including additional expenditures related to disinfection, equipment, and continuous maintenance of physical spaces. Additionally, in order to continue uninterrupted operations, the University needed to enhance existing and to acquire additional new technologies required to maintain the University's value proposition of the highest quality educational experiences across the globe.

The indirect costs, including the opportunity costs, included adjusting physical spaces in order to maintain safe and secure environments for the students and employees, including first emptying and then limiting the occupancy of the students' housing. In addition, due to its existing model in which almost 50% of University students are working adults, the COVID impact was particularly impactful in our metro/extended campuses which primarily serve Black and underserved populations. The 20% drop in enrollment at these locations was directly correlated with the loss of employment in the communities Webster has traditionally served.

Meeting the Needs of the Most Vulnerable

After our rapid pivot to fully online programs for all students at every Webster campus and the transition to remote working conditions, a number of acute financial needs were present on the part of

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[20] See Rasul (2020) for an interesting and useful approach to addressing COVID-19 challenges.

specific staff and students in addition to those at the institutional level. While federal funds became available for direct aid to some students and limited institutional expenses, individuals required additional emergency support for health, housing, and food as well as tuition to continue in their degree programs. Webster team members met the challenge of this moment with an opportunity to embrace a digital engagement platform that enabled crowdfunding, a new approach for Webster that perfectly married the need and the solution. In addition to creating funds for specific initiatives, the University invested institutional dollars to create a time-limited matching program designed to incentivize unrestricted pledges and gifts and continued an evergreen fund to support strategic investments that address just-in-time needs with just-in-time funds. A truly generous outpouring of support from friends, faculty, staff, and alumni of the University provided funds for student and staff emergency needs, scholarships for students who serve on the front lines, and targeted support for international students' needs. Over 600 individual gifts contributed over $275,000 that has now benefitted hundreds of individuals. Many gifts were provided by individuals giving to Webster for the first time, recognizing the need to step up in a time of need.

The generosity of a supportive community was also evident in the philanthropic support of Webster's Jackson-Thomas Giving Society, newly established to honor Webster's strong tradition of serving Black students and to attract needed resources for the present moment. The Jackson-Thomas Society honors Webster's first two Black graduates in 1950 by creating a dedicated source of funding for the smaller and in many cases, one-time, financial needs of our students of color. Soon after the health pandemic, the CDO, in collaboration with the Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations, communicated with Webster University's Black alumni and friends encouraging their philanthropy to support, through the Jackson-Thomas Society, the immediate financial needs of these students who were most likely to experience immediate impact from the pandemic's effects on health, income, employment, and a host of other threats. In the spirit of care for our Black and ethnically diverse students, alumni and friends responded to that appeal for support and continue to provide financial support of those students through the Jackson-Thomas Giving Society.

Webster takes pride in continuing to open doors and provide access to a high-quality and affordable University education for some of the most ethnically under-represented and financially challenged members of the community during this time of financial uncertainty for many students and their families. At the start of this academic year, Webster University increased its institutional financial commitment to some of the most in need. Not only did Webster's leadership team dramatically increase the annual number of the [Dr. Donald M. Suggs Scholarship](#) recipients from two to 10 but also increased the value of the four-year Scholarship from 75% of tuition cost to 100% of tuition for those 10 new Suggs Scholars. Since the start of the 2013 academic year, Webster University has annually awarded the Suggs Scholarship to enhance the St. Louis recruitment and retention of academically talented undergraduate students from under-represented ethic groups. During that initial two years of the Scholarship, the University annually selected one four-year recipient. With the start of the 2015 academic year, the number of annual recipients doubled. The practice of annually awarding two four-year recipients continued until the start of the 2020 academic year. The Suggs Scholarship was established in honor of a local Black oral surgeon, newspaper publisher, former Webster University Board of Trustee, patron of the arts and distinguished community leader.

Communicating with Intention and Through Action

Webster's Global Marketing and Communications division is staffed to support marketing and recruitment for students, community engagement, public relations, and strategic communications for internal and external audiences. They are responsible for coordinating the content and design of messages and stories using media as varied as the University website, print and social media,

newsletters, direct mail, and text and video employed in events as well as institutional messaging to faculty, staff, and students as well as donors, partners, and a variety of stakeholders. This leadership team relied, as never before, upon the support of this division to power a dramatic growth in the number of communications as well as employing new tools for the first time, both with positive impact. In the first weeks of the pandemic's effects, teams of colleagues in the work groups met almost daily, gathering information from campuses on four continents, monitoring the spread of COVID-19 and the public health restrictions that required our attention and response. In turn, almost daily communications were posted by e-mail and on a dedicated website intended to give members of our community accurate and timely information to guide their actions. As circumstances evolved, these communications provided links to daily health self-assessments, policies regarding access to campus, required data on the status of infection counts, and many others targeted to specific audiences.

As COVID-19 related communications multiplied, what this team put in motion to communicate about racial equity and justice was dramatic and transformative for the teamwork that developed among the three of us as well as for the Webster community. The chancellor, president, and CDO have often jointly crafted messages to the community regarding a shared perspective on events occurring as close as Ferguson or as far as Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue or when terrorists targeted individuals in Sri Lanka, Jerusalem, Paris, or Vienna, as examples. Vigils and forums have been convened, and an annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion conference, in February 2020, brought 1600 participants across four days of panels and speakers.

The year 2020 will not only be remembered for the global pandemic which plagued people worldwide but also for the racial reckoning in America and beyond. This became abundantly clear in May with the killing of George Floyd. His death at the hands of police triggered national and worldwide protests calling attention to the countless killings of unarmed members of the African American community, at the hands of police. The outrage voiced by hundreds of thousands of protesters was fueled by the impact of the virus on Black and Brown communities, as the disease had a disproportionate impact on its members. Racial and ethnic minority groups had to not only simultaneously carry the brunt of increased risk of becoming ill and dying from COVID-19 but also had to fight for and call attention to the systemic racism they simultaneously experience in their safety and health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "inequities in the social determinants of health, such as poverty and healthcare access, affecting these groups are interrelated and influence a wide range of health and quality-of-life outcomes and risks" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020, "Health Equity Considerations" section).

Webster University has always led conversation and action to meet the challenges facing society. Our mission of meeting unmet needs holds our core values of DEI at its foundation. That is why, less than one week after the killing of George Floyd, this administrative team communicated a message to all members of the Webster University world-wide network of students, faculty, staff, and alumni sharing our shared concern for the welfare of our community. We spoke of the University's long history of engagement on social issues such as racism and inequity. This communication allowed us an opportunity to express our concern and care of our Black students, alumni, and colleagues and to remind our network that Webster will continue to stand as a catalyst for positive change. The University has continued the hard conversations that must be enjoined to move forward since Ferguson. The tragic killing of Floyd exposed the need to further deepen our urgency in these matters, and the isolation experienced by our community because of the pandemic conditions called for intentional outreach to individuals and groups within our community. In our initial and subsequent communications, this administrative team reaffirmed that Webster University, as an institution of higher education and global community of learners, will be part of the solutions to these problems and unequivocally declared, Black Lives Matter.

Our team communicated that Webster University intends to engage to make progress for racial and social justice; rather than a destructive path, we believe in respectful and constructive dialogue, rejecting sensational statements and hashtags meant to grab attention and little else. We committed to working together for the University to continue as a catalyst for positive change and the builder of a hopeful future during this defining moment. We reaffirmed that the Webster network must and will work together to end systemic racism, inequity, and injustice.

We immediately took the lead in confronting issues facing our nation and finding solutions. As part of Webster's ongoing efforts to underscore our commitment to addressing issues of racial inequity, we initiated a series of meetings with student leaders aimed at combatting racism, advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, which also included a review of the University's Inclusion Pledge. These student meetings included ongoing sessions to provide an opportunity for the chancellor, president, CDO, the dean and associate dean of students and members of their staff to listen to the concerns of our students of color and to partner directly with them on creating and supporting initiatives that matter most to them. Additionally, we affirmed our support for a second cohort of the Witnessing Whiteness program programmed by the YWCA of Metro St. Louis.

The following represent some additional immediate measures we took in the days following George Floyd's killing:

- organized sessions with our Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) colleagues regarding their experiences and concerns about race and racism;
- launched a North St. Louis City and County Scholarship program to support under-represented students of color;
- convened virtual meetings with incoming students and parents to discuss DEI, along with social justice issues;
- installed a banner on a public facing street, stating "Webster University Stands for Racial Equality and Justice. BLACK LIVES MATTER!" Within four days of the sign's installation, on June 7, it was stolen; however, within 12 hours, not only was a new sign reinstalled on June 12, but a second one was also installed on another street bordering the campus.
- hosted virtual sessions, organized by students and campus directors of our international campuses, discussing the Black Lives Matter movement and the history and legacy of Juneteenth; and
- supported the YWCA's virtual student leadership program focused on the needs of diverse young girls to prepare them for leadership.

Within in a month of Floyd's killing, this administrative team also conceived, planned and launched Webster Speaks: Dialogues on RACE, EQUITY and INCLUSION, a virtual series hosted by the University's CDO. He engages conversations every other Wednesday with local and national thought leaders and prominent Black voices and other people of color to discuss issues surrounding systemic racism. Audience members submit questions in advance or during the event using #WebsterSpeaks on Twitter. At the end of each episode, either Chancellor Stroble or President Schuster and in some cases, both the chancellor and president, offer their reflections and key take-aways from the conversation. All sessions are free and open to the public. Following the livestream, each episode is added to the Webster Speakers playlist on YouTube. We also launched a podcast series, Webster World Report to link the global operations of Webster at campuses on four continents throughout the world. These episodes feature University faculty, staff and students around the world describing adjustments to the changes related to COVID-19 and the racial awakening occurring throughout the world.

In recent months a number of Webster campuses have hosted virtual panels and community gatherings to highlight local and regional topics of concern and action, ranging from a forum about rights of women in the Middle East and Northern Africa, to student-led reflections on issues of equity in Leiden, regional forums about Black Lives Matter held by the Ghana campus, and reimaging and strengthening conferences focusing on Black women in leadership convened in South Carolina. Many of these voices are amplified by the Webster World podcasts, hosted by Webster's Chief Communications Officer. Through a nine-year partnership between Dr. Djibril Diallo, President and Chief Executive Officer of the African Renaissance and Diaspora Network and Chancellor Stroble, many of Webster's campuses are now poised to build active engagement with ARDN, an NGO charged to popularize the United Nations Sustainable Development goals among youth, with a current focus on the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality, ending violence and discrimination against girls and women in all its forms. This community's historic commitment to assuring fundamental human rights has taken on new urgency and global focus, a moment in time that marks the legacy of 2020 for Webster University.

Prior to the pandemic and racial awakening, this administrative team intentionally invested in building relationships across the University network of trust and collegiality. This is particularly true of our work regarding DEI. At each opportunity to address DEI, not only did the CDO speak of the shared responsibility of each member of the Webster community; the chancellor and president also reiterated that message. As a result of that, when our community, as so many others, was stressed by threats to safety and health, our colleagues stepped up to support Webster's commitment to DEI, accepting responsibilities for intention and action. As the start of the academic year neared, our colleagues initiated new activity designed to address fundamental equity needs:

- reviews and redesign of curriculum to better reflect more diverse narratives, respective of content;
- review of and redesign of faculty and staff search committee policies and practices to ensure that candidate pools are more reflective of diversity;
- reading groups for Webster Staff Alliance and the Chancellor's Book Chats that created engaging opportunities for University colleagues, across units, to enlarge our thinking about DEI; and
- reimagined and redesigned a retention and support program for rising sophomore Black male students which launched in fall of 2019, to be more inclusive of all BIPOC students to create a greater sense of support and celebration.

Our University community had just concluded the successful 2020 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion conference before the effects of the pandemic became acute in St. Louis. The immediate impact for our community from the enforced isolation of lockdown was the threatened loss of community. Human connection is strongly present on University campuses in the spring—imagine concerts, sporting events, frisbee on the quad, picnics, and gatherings, formal and less so. In a season when tradition marks the celebrations of community, culminating in commencement ceremonies, it seemed that all sense of social cohesion could be lost. Yet, as leaders we urged that Webster not cancel events but provide alternatives. From that principle we created a virtual Commencement ceremony that for the first time made possible the screen display of all graduates from every Webster campus. Virtual platforms enabled concerts, dance performances, alumni awards events, and a December Toast celebration of mid-year graduates. Just as our community flexed to use new platforms for our own professional development as well as for recruitment, convening students and families for town hall meetings, and launching dedicated webinars, we gathered virtually for holiday socials and homecoming

trivia contests. As a learning community that seeks global connection, we are using new tools in ways that transcend the boundaries of time and space in ways that an in-person event cannot achieve.

Perspectives Gained: The Path Forward

Accustomed to thinking globally and acting locally, we have learned from each other's experiences and tapped the talents and expertise across our global network to address the most pressing issues and to engage audiences around the world. The issues of racial justice, and in particular how it is related to the COVID-19 pandemic were brought to the forefront from the beginning of our efforts. Webster's systemic approach and internal organizational structure facilitated engaging the issues of racial equity and justice in our day-to-day work as well as at moments of crisis such as the twin pandemics.

Webster's approach proves that the best set of policies and instruments to address COVID-19 challenges need to be aligned with the broader strategic goals of the institution. Only when that is achieved will the sustainable recovery from the pandemic and a resilient organization be achieved. By relying on an approach that gave priority to each community member's responsibility for the safety and welfare of each other, we have avoided abrupt starts and stops in operations, maintained continuous functioning of University programs and services, and kept infection levels dramatically low. Through branded messages, signs, and masks as well as modeling by University leaders, our communications have encouraged community care and concern over mere compliance; daily self-assessments and temperature checks mitigated the need for intense testing, and the results have been positive.

Webster's unique approach was based on: (a) proper understanding of the phenomena we were dealing with; (b) timely and decisive action based response; (c) informing, educating, and mobilizing the entire university community about issues at hand and actions undertaken; (d) enforcing policies and procedures, taking into account the different impact both crises have had on diverse parts of the community; and (e) continuously evaluating major decisions and the rapidly changing environment. This approach resulted in direct actions to address the most damaging results of the twin pandemics within the Webster University system. The low infection rates are a direct result of the implemented measures, and DEI initiatives confronted the negative impact of racial segregation and social inequities. Webster's pro-active approach to the twin pandemics has been based on an adherence to university's mission, vision, and values of a continuously learning community.

True to Webster's history as a University, we have established anew the value of community. We were a proactive rather than a reactive organization; we mobilized our various communities to participate in designing, implementing, and evaluating approaches to the health and social crises, reflecting the principle that we come together to support one another. Community does what is right, even in challenging and hard times, and community is most resourceful when we believe and act locally and globally. Community encourages and welcomes everyone's contributions because it is stronger and solutions more robust when everyone contributes. Community speaks up for others and holds us responsible for speaking up and supporting others. Community causes us to engage in difficult but necessary conversations. Community has witnessed the cultural shift of shared concern and generosity for others; a prelude to needed attention to policies and procedures. Community ensures that humanity is seen and acknowledged—in times of pandemic and newly-realized racial reckoning and beyond.

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